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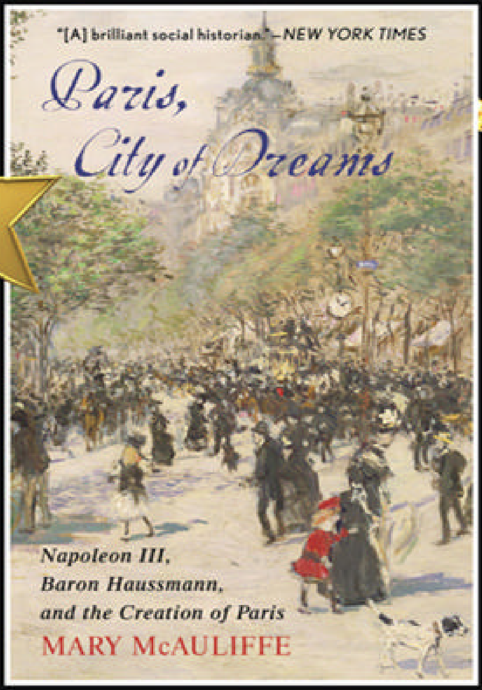
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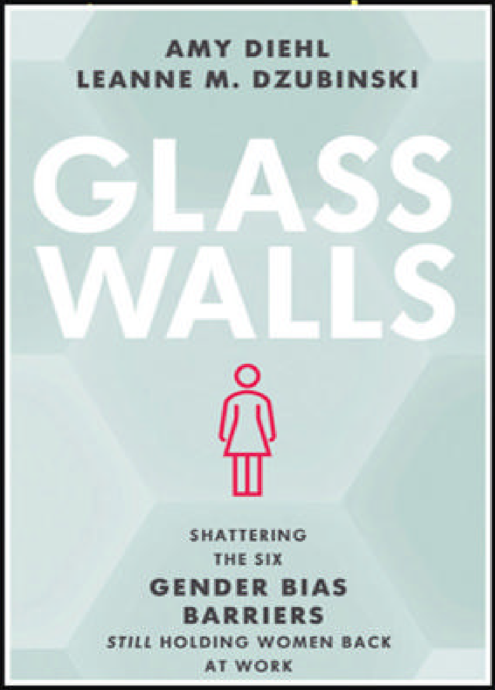
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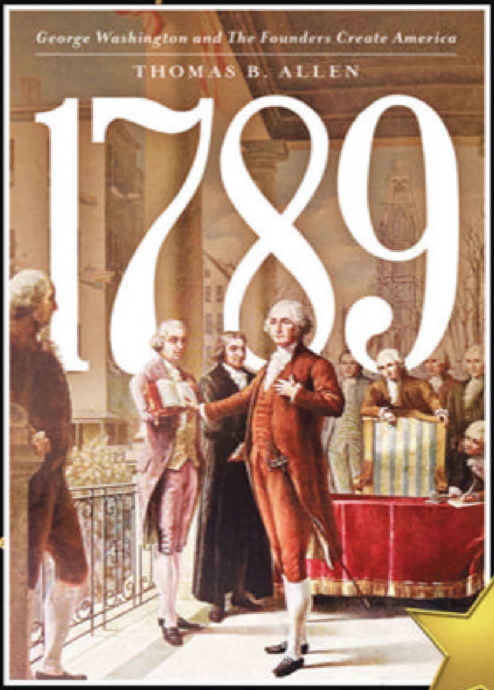
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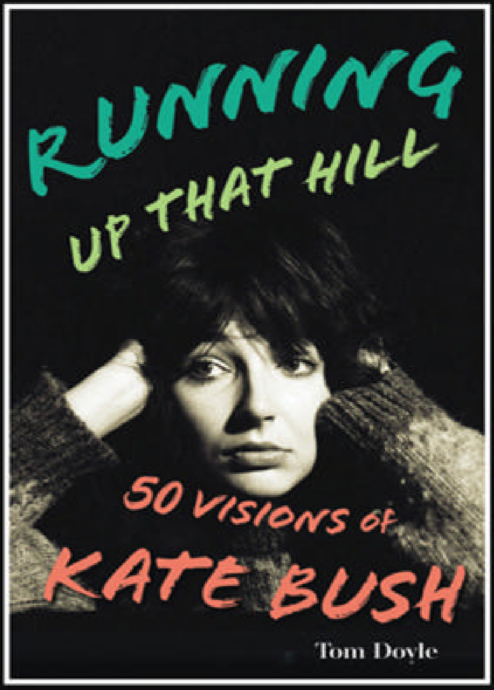
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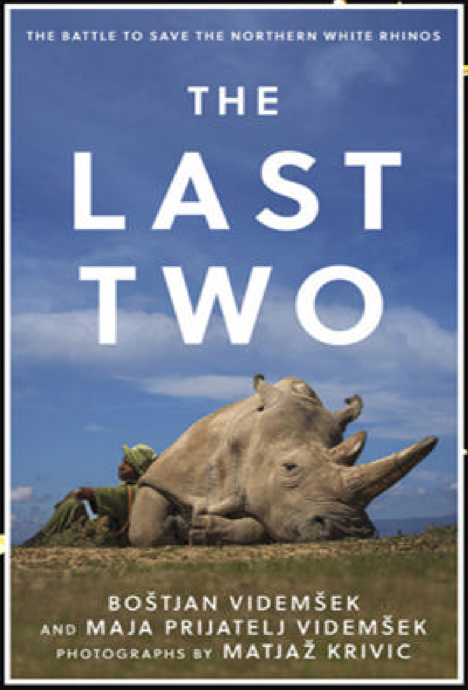
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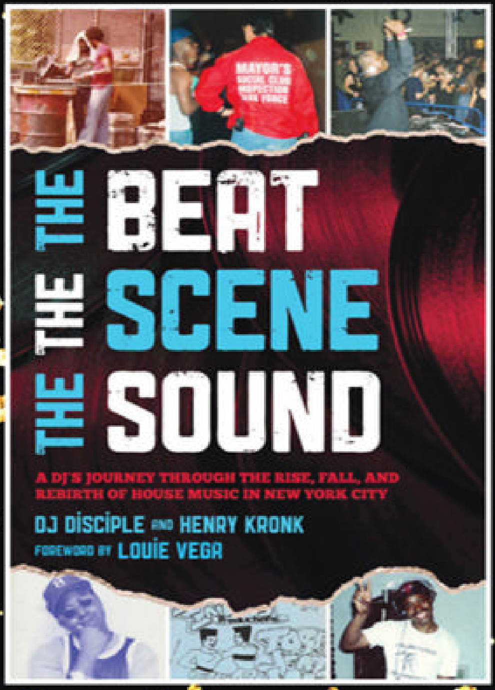
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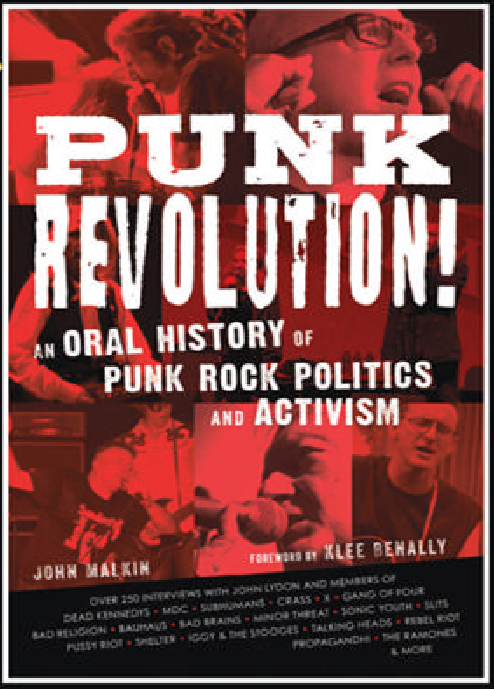
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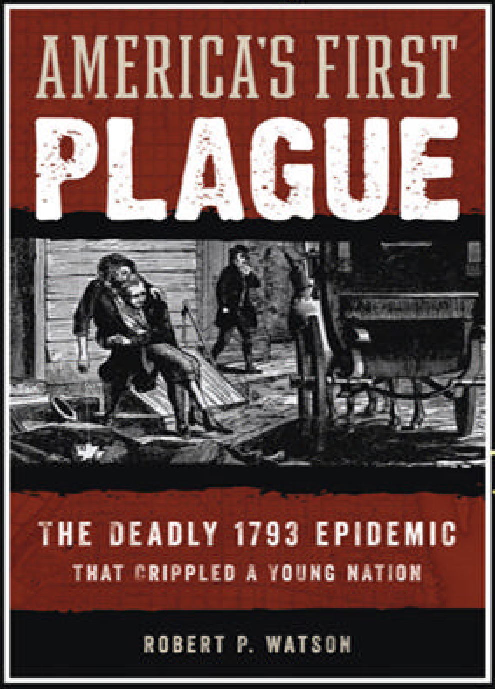
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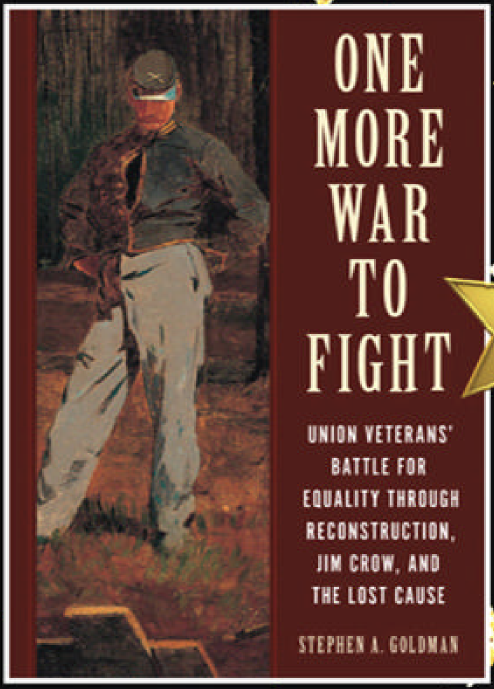
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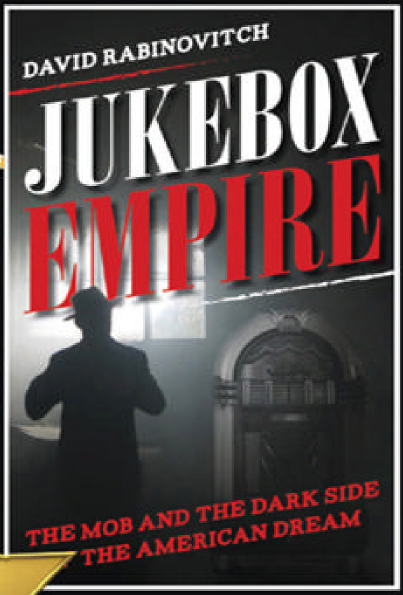
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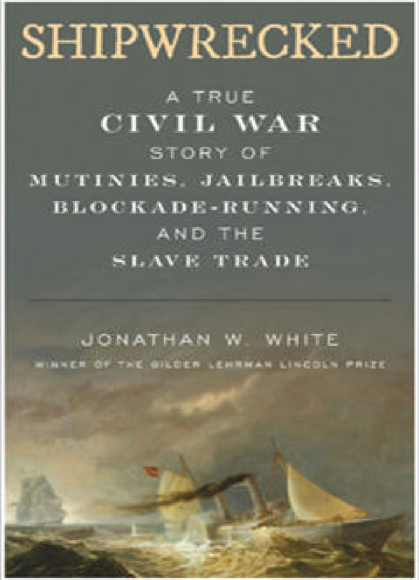
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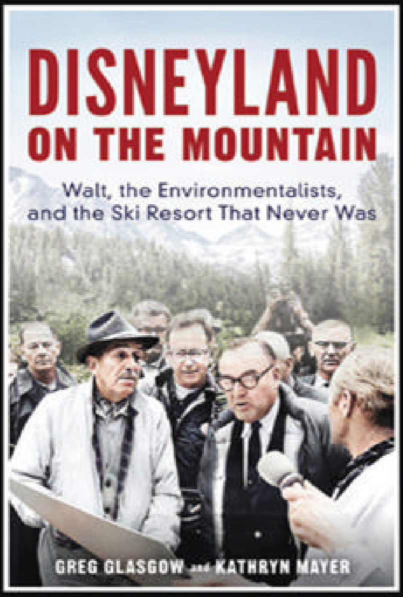
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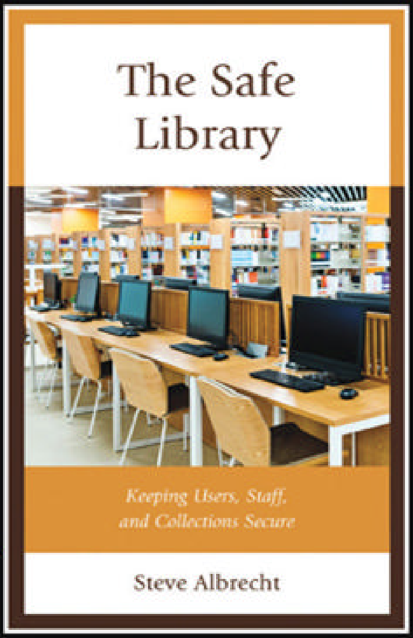
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Steve Albrecht

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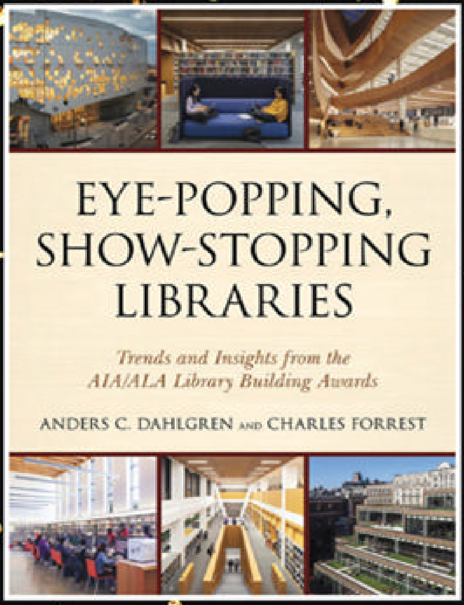
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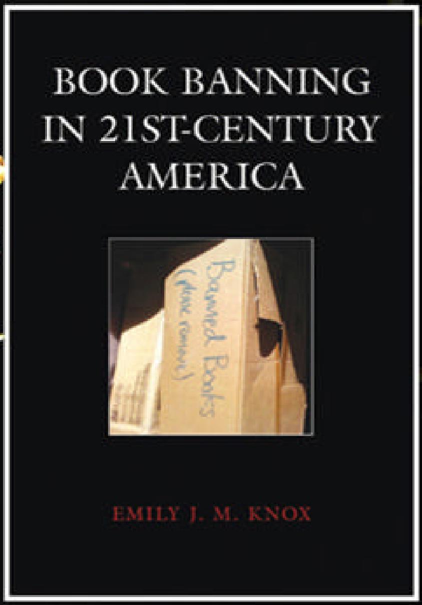
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Banned Books
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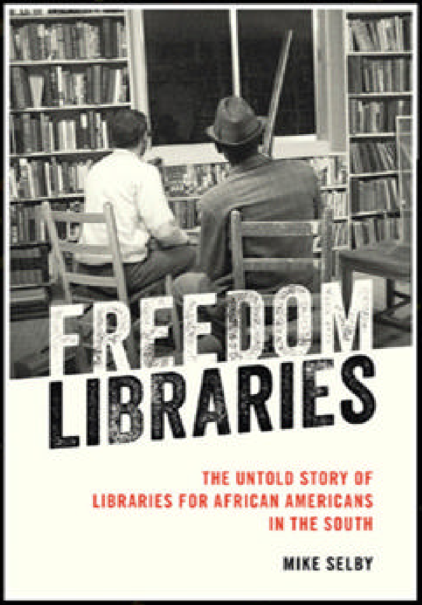
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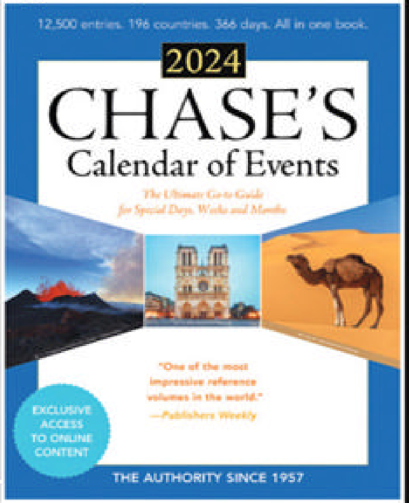
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Raj Haldar

The author and rapper will be one of many freedom-to-read advocates addressing book banning and censorship at the 2023 ALA Annual Conference in Chicago later this month. See our ALA program picks on p. 24.

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REDISCOVER CHINA!

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by Luc Kwanten

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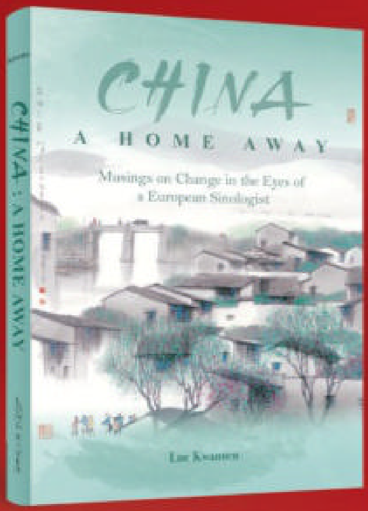

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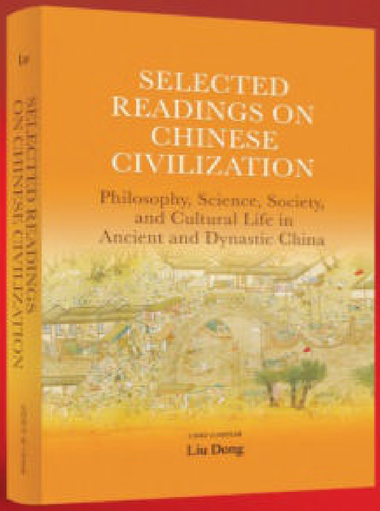
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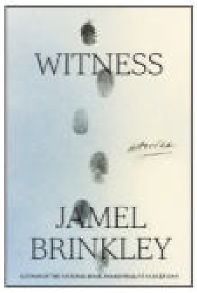

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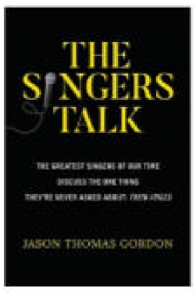

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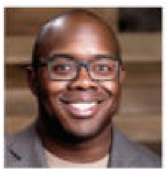

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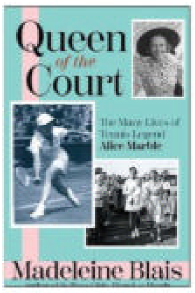

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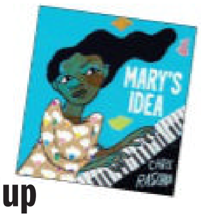

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The Week in **Publishing**

A coalition of 18 plaintiffs, which is led by the Central Arkansas Library System and includes the AAP, ABA, ALA, and the Authors Guild, filed a lawsuit challenging a new Arkansas law that would expose librarians and booksellers to criminal liability for making allegedly inappropriate books accessible to minors.

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Abrams confirmed that it "implemented workforce reduction measures affecting departments across the company" last week. Abrams declined to comment on the size of the cuts, which social media posts put at over 10.

Heather Reisman, founder of Canada's dominant bookstore chain, Indigo Books & Music, will retire in August. In addition, four board members resigned last week, with one citing a loss of confidence in the board and mistreatment.

Barnes & Noble's flagship New York City store's workers voted 97% in favor of joining the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union. Employees at three B&N outlets have now voted to unionize.

Call for Information

Feature: *Hobby, Craft & Home Books for Adults*
Deadline: June 23 **Issue:** Aug. 14

This feature will cover trends in the hobby and home space, including crafting, DIY and repairs, organizing, decorating, and gardening and houseplants. We're especially interested in instructional titles, but relevant narrative nonfiction may also be submitted. Pub dates: mid-August 2023–February 2024. New titles only, please; no reprints. Submission deadline is June 27. Visit publishersweekly.com/hobbyhomeaug23 to submit your titles.

Online & On-Air

Velocity of Content

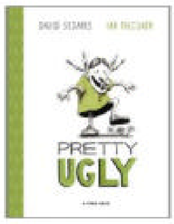
Senior writer Andrew Albanese unpacks columnist Thad McIlroy's assertions in last week's issue of *PW* that AI will soon render the book publishing industry as we know it obsolete.
publishersweekly.com/ai-augury

More to Come

Heidi MacDonald talks with the co-managing editors of the *Comics Journal*, Austin English and Kristy Valenti, about *Comics Journal Yearbook Best of 2022*, a new Fantagraphics publication spotlighting 10 of the best comics of 2022.
publishersweekly.com/comics-journal

Children's Bookshelf

Toon Books, the comics imprint recently acquired by Astra Books for Young Readers, will publish *Pretty Ugly*, the first picture book by humorist David Sedaris and featuring illustrations by the late Ian Falconer, next year.
publishersweekly.com/sedaris



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Gilbert Cruz Mixes It Up at the 'Times'

The new editor of the *New York Times Book Review* plans to keep experimenting to find the perfect formula for books coverage

When Pamela Paul stepped down as editor of the *New York Times Book Review* in April 2022, the news came as a shock to many of her colleagues. Paul had joined the *Book Review*, the paper's standalone Sunday book reviews section, in 2011, and served as its editor since 2013. In 2016, Dean Baquet, who was then executive editor of the *Times*, decided to bring all of the paper's books coverage—the daily Books section, book news, publishing industry news, and the *Book Review*—under Paul's aegis.

"Everyone was surprised," said Tina Jordan, deputy editor of the *Book Review*, of Paul's departure. "She'd been there almost 10 years. We weren't expecting it." (Soon after leaving, Paul joined the paper's Opinion section as a columnist, where she has developed a bit of a reputation in media circles for her subject matter and style.) While the search for Paul's successor was underway, Jordan took over on an interim basis.

In July 2022, Gilbert Cruz was named to succeed Paul, having previously served, since 2018, as the culture editor at the paper. Like Paul before him, Cruz oversees all books coverage at the *Times*. He started the job in August, when the book publishing industry is notoriously quiet, but nevertheless immediately set to work. The transition in leadership, Jordan said, was "pretty seamless."

First on Cruz's to-do list was to solidify the *Book Review* as the face of all of the paper's books coverage. Overseeing a team of more than 20 editors, critics, and reporters, he has spent the past year "making sure the staff feels like a whole"—that is, a single unit united under one banner. "Something I've been telling the entire staff is that there's one brand here, and it's the *New York Times Book Review*," he explained. "Everyone on this desk works for the *New York Times Book Review*—even if you're a reporter, and your stuff never appears in the *Book Review* because it closes 10 days before it hit stands, you still work for the *Book Review*. Because when most people think of our books coverage, the *Book Review* is the thing that stands out in their mind."

Gilbert Cruz

Tina Jordan

The *Book Review* is the nation's largest and most storied standalone newspaper book reviews section, having been in print since 1896—and it's one of the few remaining. At a time when books coverage has been slashed at papers around the country and reviewers on Goodreads and BookTok hold increasing sway over sales, what role the *Book Review* plays in today's publishing ecosystem is something of an existential question.

One way to retool the *Book Review* for the current age, Cruz said, is to grow its digital readership. "That's really what I came here to do," he added. For him, this means doubling down on digital efforts and launching new digital franchises, as well as "trying to think about audiences that we're not reaching right now."

Under Cruz, the *Book Review* is also streamlining its coverage. It no longer runs "double-reviews" (two reviews by different critics of a single book), which Cruz felt "sends a mixed message to the reader." It has also begun running reviews by the paper's staff book critics—Dwight Garner, Alexandra Jacobs, Jennifer Szalai, and Molly Young, who had traditionally only appeared in the daily paper, which Cruz saw as a missed opportunity. ("We have this amazing product that is more than 100 years old, and our main voices on books never appeared in there!")

Moreover, the *Book Review* has started publishing different kinds of features, such as author profiles and a new "Read Your Way Around the World" series, which is spearheaded by deputy news and features editor Juliana Barbassa. Barbassa has also led much of the *Times*' coverage of industry news, including the proliferation of book bans and AI's impact on publishing.

Though the *Book Review* covered an estimated 2,300 books last year, its print editions have noticeably slimmed down in recent years. While occasional special issues—its summer reading and holiday issues, for instance—remain robust, Cruz doubts it will ever return to the larger page

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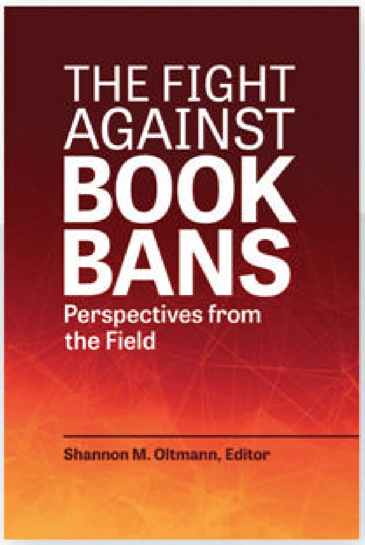
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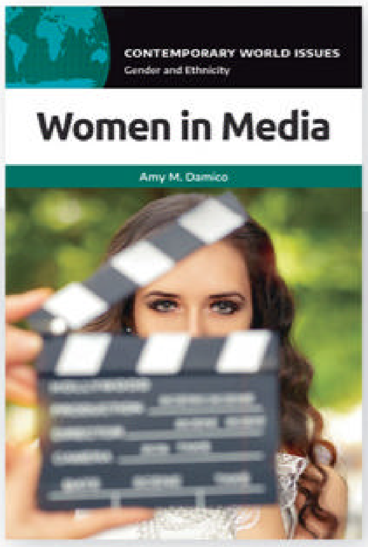
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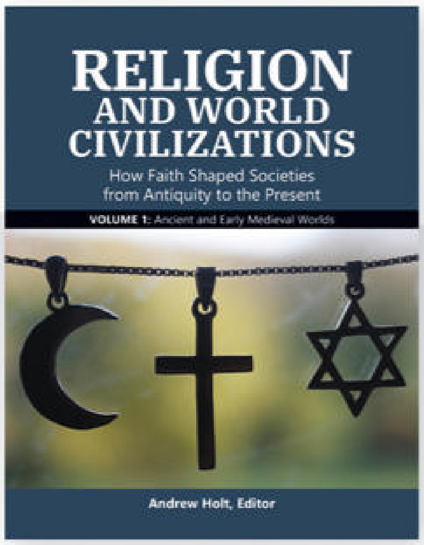
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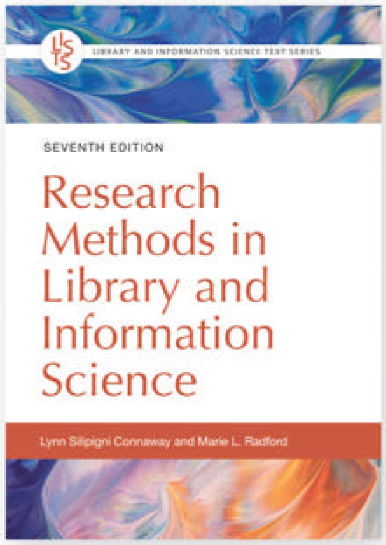
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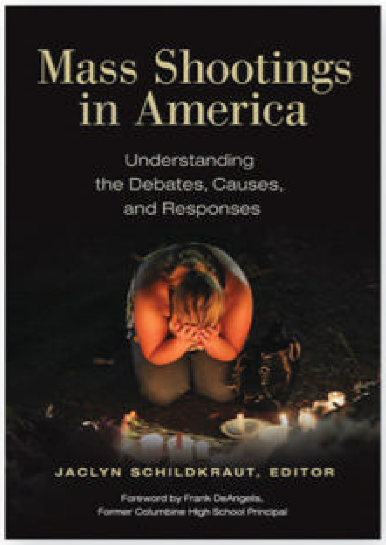
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counts of yore.

“I can’t tell the future,” he said, “but I would challenge anyone to show me a print publication that has gotten bigger” over time. Nevertheless, he hopes that during his tenure, “people who primarily experience the *Book Review* through the print product get their money’s worth.”

In describing his vision for books coverage at the *Times*, Cruz repeatedly used the word *experiment*. He spoke of testing new things, keeping what works and scrapping what doesn’t. He believes that over the course of many experiments that “the *Book Review* is going to become more of a book publication.” One of his primary goals, in this first year at the helm, “is to try a lot of stuff.” His other goal: “not to mess this up.” **—Sophia Stewart**

Publishing Titan Dick Snyder Dead at 90

Richard Snyder, who built Simon & Schuster into the biggest publisher of his day during a long and tempestuous career, died June 6 at his home in Los Angeles. He was 90.

Known to his friends and enemies alike as Dick, Snyder joined S&S in 1960 and served as president from 1975 to 1986, CEO from 1978 to 1994, and chairman from 1986 until 1994, when he was famously fired by Frank Biondi Jr., president of S&S parent company Viacom, in a move that stunned the publishing industry. At the time of his firing, S&S had revenue of about $2 billion and had businesses in all parts of publishing—education, professional, as well as trade, the only segment where it now operates.

Before Snyder’s acquisition spree began in 1983, S&S sales were about $200 million. During his time heading the company, he oversaw approximately 60 acquisitions, including the 1984 purchase of Prentice Hall, one of the largest publishing deals up to that point. His last major acquisition was the purchase of Macmillan (which is distinct from today’s Macmillan), which added college publishing, adult trade, and a large children’s operation to S&S.

In a statement, S&S remembered Snyder as the person who led the company “through some of its most storied and eventful years.” It credited Snyder for building S&S “into one of the largest and most influential publishing companies in the world, known for headline-making nonfiction, bestselling fiction and timeless classics. He leaves a legacy of enduring books and a can-do spirit that pervades Simon & Schuster to this day.”

After his exit from S&S, Snyder tried for a second act, forming an investment group to buy Western Publishing, the publisher of the hugely popular Golden Books children’s franchise, which had been losing money. His bid to broaden it into a major publisher and media company failed, and after two bankruptcy proceedings, the assets of the renamed Golden Books Family Entertainment Company were sold to Random House and Classic Media.

During his heyday, Snyder was as powerful, feared, and colorful a figure as the modern publishing industry has seen. Famous for his tirades and penchant for firing employees, he nonetheless led a company that published hundreds of critically acclaimed titles as well as commercial successes. He was also active within all aspects of publishing. When the National Book Awards were struggling in the 1980s, Snyder, along with such industry heavyweights as Larry Hughes, Al Silverman, and Alberto Vitale, banded together to create the National Book Foundation, which put the program on a much sounder financial footing and increased its visibility within the industry. He also helped to revive International PEN, and served two stints on the board of the Association of American Publishers.

His private life was also a topic of industry gossip, particularly his 1990 divorce from Joni Evans, one of the first women to crack the upper ranks of publishing. Evans served as president and publisher of Simon & Schuster (1977–1989) and publisher at Random House (1989–1994), and after leaving RH, was senior v-p of the William Morris Agency until 2006.

At the time of Snyder’s firing from S&S, Roger Straus,

Richard Snyder in 1987

© HELEN MARCUS 1981 PUBLISHERS WEEKLY ARCHIVE the CEO of Farrar, Straus and Giroux, who was often critical of Synder’s acquisition strategy, called his ouster sad, observing, “It’s sad like the song says, ‘It’s sad when the great ship went down.’ We disagreed about almost everything, but it is bad for publishing. Dick was a good publisher who published a lot of good books.”

—Jim Milliot

Chicago Booksellers Embrace Diversity

In his poem “Chicago,” Carl Sandburg describes the nation’s third-largest city as the “Hog Butcher of the World/ Tool Maker, Stacker of Wheat/ Player with Railroads and the Nation’s Freight Handler”—but he may as well have added that it is also the city of many bookstores. Of the 65 Illinois bookstores that are Great Lakes Independent Bookstore Association members, about 50% are located inside Chicago’s city limits; scores more serve the suburbs.

COURTESY OF KRISTIN GILBERT

Javier Ramirez and Kristin Gilbert, co-owners of Exile in Bookville, located inside Chicago’s historic Fine Arts Building.

Lynne Mooney, a co-owner of Women & Children First, a feminist bookstore, described Chicago’s bookstore scene as “dynamic,” adding, “The bookstores here all have strong and distinct personalities and people are not afraid to take risks.”

There are, of course, full-service general bookstores, such as 57th Street Books, located in Hyde Park. It’s just a few blocks from the legendary Powell’s Books, which is renowned for its huge inventory of used and remaindered books. Other general bookstores include Sandmeyer’s in the South Loop, Madison Street Books in the West Loop, and Volumes BookCafe in Wicker Park; Volumes also operates a 1,500-sq.-ft. satellite bookstore in the heart of the Magnificent Mile, the upscale shopping district on North Michigan Avenue.

According to Volumes co-owner Rebecca George, attendees at this year’s American Library Association Annual Conference, set to run June 22–27, who stop by the store’s Wicker Park location will receive 50% discounts on coffee and tea.

As Mooney pointed out, the indies scattered around the Windy City are doing well because each is unique and fills a distinct niche. In Logan Square, City Lit is a general bookstore with a large inventory of children’s books, while the Book Cellar nearby is a general bookstore with a wine bar. Unabridged Bookstore in Lake View, another general bookstore, stocks a broad selection of LGBTQ literature. In River West, Semicolon Bookstore specializes in Black literature, while the Abraham Lincoln Bookshop specializes in books on the Civil War and about the U.S. presidents, especially the 16th. Da Book Joint, a 150-sq.-ft. store in a retail space created from rehabbed shipping containers, opened its doors in Bronzeville, on Chicago’s South Side, in late 2021. It specializes in African American titles across all genres, for both adults and children, though owner Verlean Singletary noted, “Our biggest section is books for tweens and teens.”

The city’s two newest niche bookstores—The Understudy, a theater café and bookstore in Andersonville, and Skunk Cabbage, a Logan Square bookstore specializing in environmental issues and sustainability that hosts workshops for community members—both opened their doors this spring.

Exile in Bookville is located in the historic Fine Arts Building on South Michigan Avenue downtown. EiB sells vinyl records along with books, and boasts a large inventory of music titles and a wall of small press releases.

“There are a lot of new faces on the bookselling scene,” noted Javier Ramirez, who worked for 25 years as a bookseller at a number of Chicagoland stores before opening EiB with business partner Kristin Gilbert on Independent Bookstore Day 2021. Echoing Mooney, Ramirez praised the collegiality of his fellow booksellers, and maintained that their success is due to each “doing weird things” to realize their vision for their bookstores. “We all have the same common goal, but different identities.” He added that EiB is offering 15% discounts on store-branded T-shirts and tote bags to ALA attendees. “So wear your badge!”

Founded in 2016 as a used bookstore, Pilsen Community Books in the Pilsen neighborhood became an employee-owned and -operated bookstore in 2020 that sells both new and used books. Seminary Co-op, located near the University of Chicago campus in Hyde Park, was founded in 1961 to sell scholarly books; four years ago, it tweaked its mission and now bills itself as “the country’s first not-for-

The Weekly Scorecard

Print Sales Start June on Down Note

Unit sales of print books fell 6.1% in the week ended June 2, 2023, from the comparable week in 2022, at outlets that report to Circana BookScan. The only category to post an increase was young adult fiction, where sales inched up 0.9%. The category benefitted from two new titles that sold well: *Cherish* by Tracy Wolff was #1 in the category, selling more than 27,000 copies. In fourth place was *Girls Like Girls* by Hayley Kiyoko, which sold more than 7,000 copies. Adult fiction sales fell 1.6% in the week, compared to 2022. Emily Henry's *Happy Place* returned to the top spot in the category, selling just over 32,000 copies. The best-performing new title was the sixth volume in the Heaven Official's Blessing series by Mo Xiang Tong Xiu, which sold more than 15,000 copies, putting it in 11th place on the category chart. The top-selling new book in adult nonfiction, which had a 7.1% decline, was *Culture Shock* by Jim Clifton, which sold more than 10,000 copies, putting it in the sixth place on the category chart. The juvenile categories had significant declines in the week, with nonfiction falling 14.1% and fiction down 8.3%. A year ago, three titles in the My Big Wipe Clean series sold a total of about 60,000 copies in their first week. In the most recent week, the three top titles in nonfiction sold about 40,000 copies, led by Wendy Loggia's *Taylor Swift: A Little Golden Book Biography*. The decline in fiction came despite a new release, *FGTeeV: Out of Time*, selling more than 12,000 copies and landing it in fifth place on the category list.

TOTAL SALES OF PRINT BOOKS (IN THOUSANDS)

	JUNE 3, 2022	JUNE 2, 2023	CHGE WEEK	CHGE YTD
Total	13,086	12,282	-6.1%	-2.4%

UNIT SALES OF PRINT BOOKS BY CATEGORY (IN THOUSANDS)

	JUNE 3, 2022	JUNE 2, 2023	CHGE WEEK	CHGE YTD
Adult Nonfiction	4,752	4,416	-7.1%	-4.8%
Adult Fiction	3,394	3,340	-1.6%	4.7%
Juvenile Nonfiction	1,268	1,089	-14.1%	-7.7%
Juvenile Fiction	2,867	2,629	-8.3%	-5.0%
Young Adult Fiction	569	574	0.9%	-0.1%
Young Adult Nonfiction	74	72	-3.3%	-0.4%

UNIT SALES OF PRINT BOOKS BY FORMAT (IN THOUSANDS)

	JUNE 3, 2022	JUNE 2, 2023	CHGE WEEK	CHGE YTD
Hardcover	3,400	3,222	-5.2%	-3.8%
Trade Paperback	8,003	7,626	-4.7%	-6.4%
Mass Market Paperback	591	477	-19.3%	-17.7%
Board Books	634	592	-6.7%	1.1%

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profit bookstore whose mission is bookselling."

One of Chicago's newest booksellers, Tim Wurman, the owner of Three Avenues Bookshop in West Lakeview, perhaps sums up best what makes Chicago's bookselling community so special: "We've made a lot of friends since we opened our doors last fall," he said. "Rebecca George at Volumes, Javier Ramirez at Exile, Danni Mullen at Semicolon—those are our three main mentors. And we got to know so many others planning the Independent Bookstore Crawl in April. Chicago booksellers have welcomed us into their community. They rock!"

—Claire Kirch

Children's Institute 2023 Promotes Innovation

Children's Institute 2023, which ran June 5–7, drew more than 360 booksellers from 240 stores to Milwaukee, 70% of whom were first-time attendees, according to the ABA, which organized the event. "We see you, we celebrate you, and we thank you," ABA CEO Allison Hill told attendees, asserting that it's "more important than ever" to put books in the hands of children, due to the prevailing "headwinds of fear, bigotry, and ignorance." Programming focused on innovation, cohesiveness, and a more holistic approach to bookselling.

In addition to educational sessions, CI2023's organizers brought galvanizing keynotes and featured talks to the stage. Printz Medalist Daniel Nayeri (*The Many Assassinations of Samir, the Seller of Dreams*) urged managers to "give people careers, not jobs." Author-illustrator team Nikki Grimes and Brian Pinkney (*A Walk in the Woods*) gave a presentation about grief and solace.

CI2023 closed with a keynote from civil rights icon Ruby Bridges (*Dear Ruby, Hear Our Hearts*), who appeared with Nikkolas Smith (*The Artivist*).

Children's Institute 2024 will be held in New Orleans, June 10–12. More coverage of CI2023 will appear in *PW*'s June 19 issue.

Exhibitors at Children's Institute

DEALS

By Rachel Deahl

DEAL OF THE WEEK

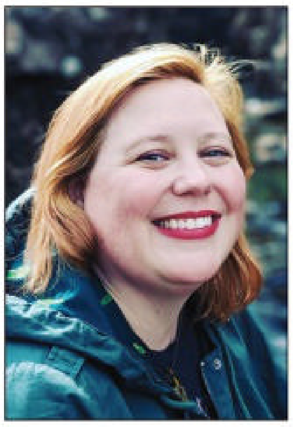
Yang's 'Shoes' Walk to Park Row

COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR

Yang

For six figures, Park Row preempted North American rights to *The Lotus Shoes* by **Jane Yang**. The debut novel, which **Nicole Luongo** and **Laura Brown** bought from **Madeleine Milburn** at the Madeleine Milburn Literary Agency, is a work of historical fiction about two women in 19th-century China. Park Row said it follows "the high-born Linjing and her maidservant Little Flower, who is gifted with embroidery, as they navigate the limited realities and strict expectations placed upon them." Yang was born in China and raised in Australia. The novel is set for January 2025.

St. Martin's Chases Hawkins's 'Storm'


Hawkins

Rachel Hawkins (*The Wife Upstairs*) re-upped with **Sarah Cantin** at St. Martin's, selling world English rights to two novels. *The Storm* will be released in January 2025, and the second, currently untitled book is set for January 2026. *The Storm*, St. Martin's said, is a dual-timeline tale set at a Gulf Coast hotel that has withstood 70 years of hurricanes. However, with a superstorm bearing down, "the secrets of the past threaten the inn's survival from inside and out." **Holly Root** at Root Literary represented Hawkins.

Fargo Favors Random House

© KATHERINE HANNAH

Fargo

Layne Fargo (*Temper*) sold *The Favorites* to Random House's **Caitlin McKenna**. The novel marks the thriller writer's first foray into women's fiction. **Sharon Pelletier** at Dystel, Goderich & Bourret brokered the two-book, world English rights agreement. Random House called *The Favorites* "a modern reimagining of *Wuthering Heights*." It follows the relationship between a decorated ice dancer and her childhood sweetheart, who grows up to be her Olympic skating partner. McKenna said Fargo has taken Brontë's original and fused it with "a riveting contemporary story of unapologetic ambition and love in the world of elite skating." *The Favorites* is set for late 2024 or early 2025.

Fink's 'Witch' Haunts Gallery

© TODD FINK

Fink

Musician **Orenda Fink** sold *The Witch's Daughter* to **Rebecca Strobel** at Gallery in a U.S., Canadian, and open market rights agreement. In the book, Fink—who is part of the indie music duo Azure Ray—blends details of her own story with a meditation on mother-daughter relationships. Gallery said *The Witch's Daughter* is "based on a childhood spent amid poverty and her mother's diagnosis of the borderline personality disorder type known as 'The Witch.'" **Yfat Reiss Gendell** at YRG Partners represented Fink.

Viking Wins DuQue's Stories

© TONY YANG

DuQue

North American rights to the debut story collection by **Jenzo DuQue** were acquired at auction by Viking's **Ibrahim Ahmad**. The publisher said *The Rest of Us* explores "the duality of the first-generation Latinx experience from the streets of Chicago to the forests of Colombia, grappling with the reverberations of national and personal history." DuQue contributed to *The Best American Short Stories 2021*. **Julie Barer** at the Book Group brokered the agreement, which also includes a currently untitled novel.

Kander's Adult Debut Goes to Mira

© JERRY SMITH

Kander

Mira Books' **April Osborn** bought North American rights to **Beth Kander**'s adult debut at auction. The publisher said *I Made It Out of Clay* is about a single, Jewish woman who, "in a drunken panic days before her sister's wedding, creates a golem" to "solve all her problems, only to discover he might unearth the greatest fear she's ever faced." **Allison Hellegers** at Stimola Literary Studio represented the playwright and children's book author.

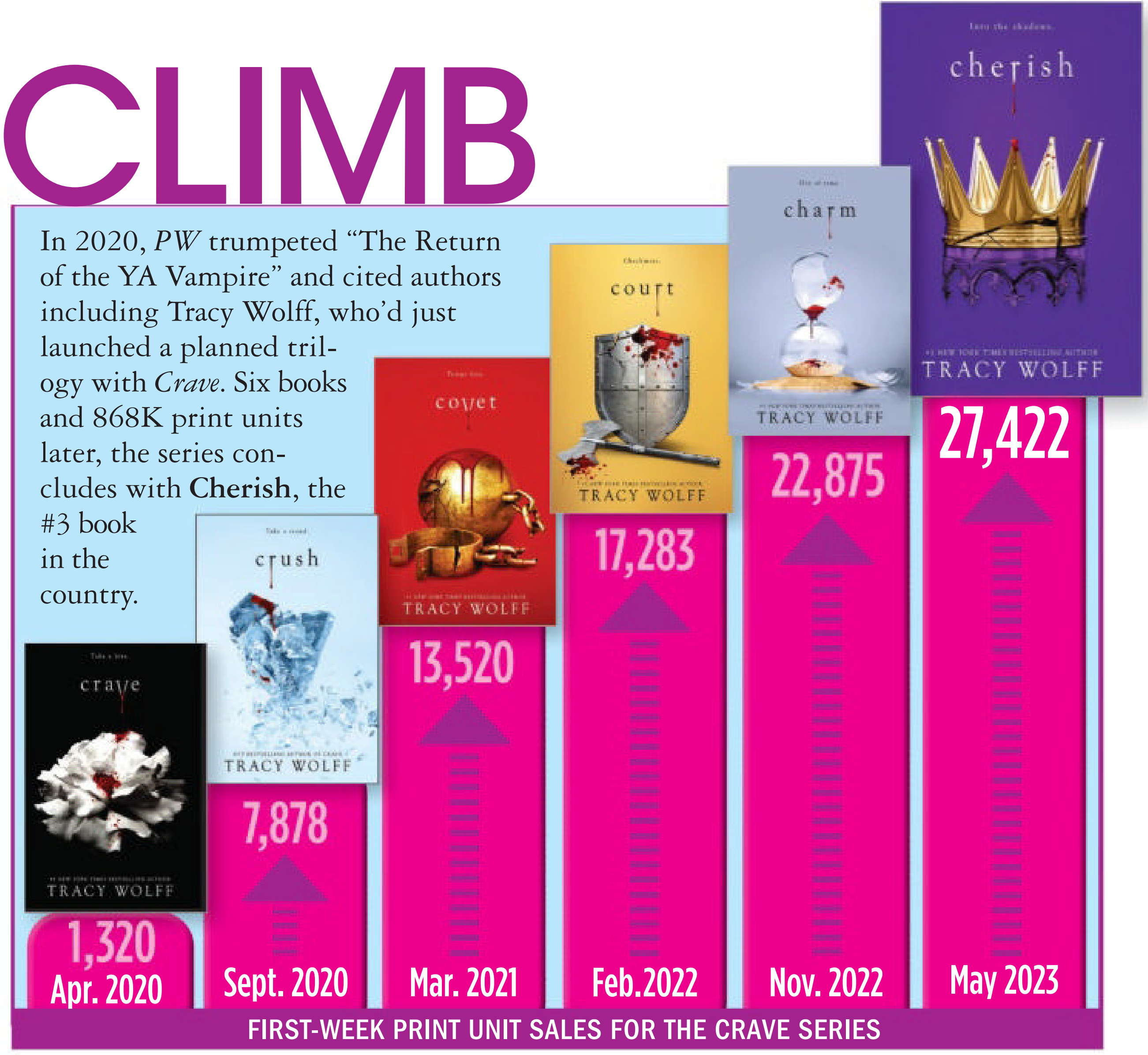
Behind the Bestsellers

MAY 28–JUNE 3, 2023

By Carolyn Juris

CLIMB

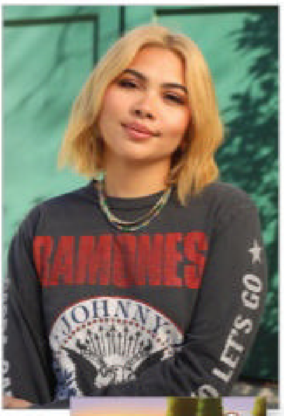
In 2020, *PW* trumpeted “The Return of the YA Vampire” and cited authors including Tracy Wolff, who’d just launched a planned trilogy with *Crave*. Six books and 868K print units later, the series concludes with **Cherish**, the #3 book in the country.



FIRST-WEEK PRINT UNIT SALES FOR THE CRAVE SERIES

Girls on Film

Actor, musician, and debut YA novelist Hayley Kiyoko takes the #5 spot on our children’s fiction list with **Girls Like Girls**, inspired by her music video—151 million views and counting—of the same name. “Kiyoko crafts a pitch-perfect tale about a grieving teen in 2006 grappling with first love,” our review said. The author explained her story’s roots in an interview with *PW*. “This comes from me desperately needing to feel seen and comes from my truth of navigating my whole life—the need to prove my worth, and to feel seen as a person,” she said. “Growing up, even though loving women is not my entire personality, it was a huge part of my life.”



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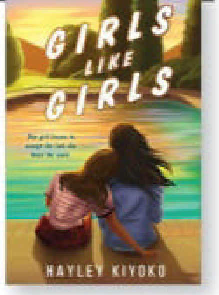

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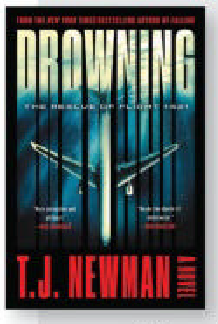
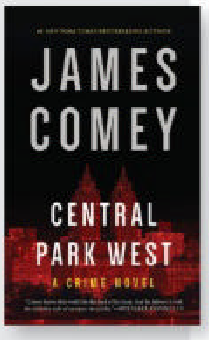


DROWNING
T.J. Newman
#4 Hardcover Fiction

Newman, a former bookseller and flight attendant, follows her 2021 debut, *Falling* (112K print copies sold), with another thriller that may as well bear the coverline “and you thought flying coach was the stuff of nightmares.”



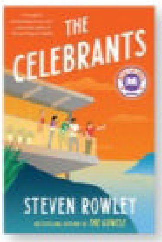
CENTRAL PARK WEST
James Comey
#20 Hardcover Fiction

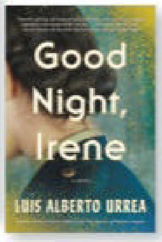
“Former FBI director Comey makes a sturdy crime fiction debut with this twisting account of the murder of a disgraced former New York governor,” according to our review. The author brings “a sense of authenticity to the setting and plot machinations, though he’s occasionally guilty of leaning a bit too much toward education over entertainment.” Still, “a sequel would be welcome.”

In Clubland

The Celebrants by Steven Rowley got the June nod from Read with Jenna and the Good Housekeeping Book Club. “Rowley offers another winning story of a friend group held together by an unusual bond,” according to our review. “Rowley admirably avoids sentimentality along the way, and there’s plenty of fresh and witty dialogue.” It debuts at #14 on our hardcover fiction list.

Barnes & Noble Book Club tapped **Good Night, Irene**, which lands one notch below. Luis Alberto Urrea “transports readers to the Western Front of WWII in his stunning latest,” per our starred review. “It’s a moving and graceful tribute to friendship and to heroic women who have shouldered the burdens of war.”





TOP 10 OVERALL

RANK	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	UNITS
1	**Happy Place**	Emily Henry	Berkley	32,126
2	**Oh, the Places You’ll Go!**	Dr. Seuss	Random House	30,997
3	**Cherish**	Tracy Wolff	Entangled Teen	27,422
4	**It Starts with Us**	Colleen Hoover	Atria	24,594
5	**It Ends with Us**	Colleen Hoover	Atria	24,120
6	**Twenty Thousand Fleas Under the Sea** (Dog Man #11)	Dav Pilkey	Graphix	22,999
7	**Meet Me at the Lake**	Carley Fortune	Berkley	19,505
8	**Verity**	Colleen Hoover	Grand Central	19,402
9	**Icebreaker**	Hannah Grace	Atria	18,060
10	**Lessons in Chemistry**	Bonnie Garmus	Doubleday	16,865

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Adult Bestsellers | MAY 28–JUNE 3, 2023

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Hardcover Frontlist Fiction

RANK	LW	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	ISBN	UNITS
1	2	**Happy Place**	Emily Henry	Berkley	9780593441275	32,126
2	3	**The Covenant of Water**	Abraham Verghese	Grove	9780802162175	16,453
3	1	**Identity**	Nora Roberts	St. Martin's	9781250284112	16,194
4	–	**Drowning**	T.J. Newman	Avid Reader	9781982177911	11,175
5	6	**Demon Copperhead**	Barbara Kingsolver	Harper	9780063251922	10,280
6	13	**Tomorrow, and Tomorrow, and Tomorrow**	Gabrielle Zevin	Knopf	9780593321201	8,394
7	8	**The 23rd Midnight**	Patterson/Paetro	Little, Brown	9780316402781	7,910
8	9	**Simply Lies**	David Baldacci	Grand Central	9781538750636	7,682
9	7	**Tom Clancy: Flash Point**	Don Bentley	Putnam	9780593422786	7,549
10	12	**Hello Beautiful**	Ann Napolitano	Dial Press	9780593243732	7,299
11	14	**It Ends with Us**	Colleen Hoover	Atria	9781668021040	6,672
12	–	**Killing Moon**	Jo Nesbø	Knopf	9780593536964	6,540
13	17	**Yellowface**	R.F. Kuang	Morrow	9780063250833	6,145
14	–	**The Celebrants**	Steven Rowley	Putnam	9780593540428	6,028
15	–	**Good Night, Irene**	Luis Alberto Urrea	Little, Brown	9780316265850	5,535
16	15	**Queen Charlotte**	Quinn/Rhimes	Avon	9780063305083	5,255
17	5	**The Making of Another Major Motion Picture Masterpiece**	Tom Hanks	Knopf	9780525655596	5,222
18	4	**Fourth Wing**	Rebecca Yarros	Red Tower	9781649374042	5,120
19	16	**The Wedding Planner**	Danielle Steel	Delacorte	9781984821775	4,702
20	–	**Central Park West**	James Comey	Mysterious	9781613164037	4,543

Hardcover Frontlist Nonfiction

RANK	LW	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	ISBN	UNITS
1	1	**Magnolia Table, Vol. 3**	Joanna Gaines	Morrow	9780062820174	12,616
2	4	**The Creative Act**	Rick Rubin	Penguin Press	9780593652886	11,489
3	2	**The Wager**	David Grann	Doubleday	9780385534260	11,084
4	–	**Culture Shock**	Clifton/Harter	Gallup	9781595622471	10,434
5	3	**Outlive**	Peter Attia	Harmony	9780593236598	10,427
6	7	**I'm Glad My Mom Died**	Jennette McCurdy	Simon & Schuster	9781982185824	6,725
7	–	**Life-Size Birds**	Nancy J. Hajeski	Thunder Bay	9781645179153	6,030
8	11	**The Wisdom of the Bullfrog**	William H. McRaven	Grand Central	9781538707944	3,951
9	14	**Spare**	Prince Harry	Random House	9780593593806	3,710
10	8	**Disruptive Thinking**	T.D. Jakes	Faithwords	9781546004004	3,608
11	21	**The Return of the Gods**	Jonathan Cahn	Frontline	9781636411422	3,528
12	36	**King**	Jonathan Eig	FSG	9780374279295	3,290
13	10	**The Daddy Diaries**	Andy Cohen	Holt	9781250890924	3,158
14	17	**The Light We Carry**	Michelle Obama	Crown	9780593237465	3,110
15	–	**Everything All at Once**	Stephanie Catudal	HarperOne	9780063253131	2,985
16	13	**The Glucose Goddess Method**	Jessie Inchauspe	Simon Element	9781668024522	2,767
17	29	**The Daily Dad**	Ryan Holiday	Portfolio	9780593539057	2,764
18	–	**Letters to Trump**	Donald J. Trump	Winning Team	9781735503752	2,701
19	6	**Crimes Against America**	Jeanine Pirro	Winning Team	9781735503769	2,497
20	–	**The Trial of the Century**	Gregg Jarrett	Threshold	9781982198572	2,191

LW: rank last week

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Mass Market Frontlist

RANK	LW	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	ISBN	UNITS
1	4	The Challenge	Danielle Steel	Dell	9781984821638	6,373
2	1	Sparring Partners	John Grisham	Vintage	9780593470909	5,793
3	5	Desolation Creek	Johnstone/Johnstone	Pinnacle	9780786049851	5,348
4	24	Danger Zone	Nora Roberts	St. Martin's	9781250890078	3,816
5	23	This Man Must Die	Johnstone/Johnstone	Pinnacle	9780786049714	3,236
6	31	Devious	Lisa Jackson	Zebra	9781420155006	3,045
7	30	Old Cowboys Never Die	Johnstone/Johnstone	Pinnacle	9780786049028	2,949
8	41	A Family Affair	Robyn Carr	Mira	9780778333807	2,609
9	21	The Ninth Month	Patterson/DiLallo	Grand Central	9781538752999	2,551
10	25	Clive Cussler's Dark Vector	Graham Brown	Putnam	9780593419694	2,465
11	3	Explosive Trail	Terri Reed	Love Inspired Suspense	9781335587749	2,416
12	20	Rising Tiger	Brad Thor	Pocket	9781982182168	2,411
13	10	Deadly Amish Abduction	Laura Scott	Love Inspired Suspense	9781335587756	2,344
14	27	The Russian	Patterson/Born	Grand Central	9781538703588	2,311
15	44	Rogue Stallion	Diana Palmer	Harlequin Diamond	9781335662491	2,286
16	9	Cougar Mountain Ambush	Kathie Ridings	Love Inspired Suspense	9781335587794	2,282
17	6	The Amish Spinster's Dilemma	Jocelyn McClay	Love Inspired	9781335585738	2,269
18	7	Tracking the Tiny Target	Connie Queen	Love Inspired Suspense	9781335587770	2,268
19	8	His Forgotten Amish Love	Rebecca Kertz	Love Inspired	9781335585721	2,256
20	11	Montana Cold Case Conspiracy	Sharon Dunn	Love Inspired Suspense	9781335587763	2,246

Trade Paperback Frontlist

RANK	LW	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	ISBN	UNITS
1	1	It Starts with Us	Colleen Hoover	Atria	9781668001226	24,594
2	2	Meet Me at the Lake	Carley Fortune	Berkley	9780593438558	19,505
3	3	Icebreaker	Hannah Grace	Atria	9781668026038	18,060
4	–	Heaven Official's Blessing, Vol. 6	Mo Xiang Tong Xiu	Seven Seas	9781638585510	15,143
5	5	The Housemaid	Freida McFadden	Grand Central	9781538742570	14,882
6	9	Twisted Love	Ana Huang	Bloom	9781728274867	14,209
7	6	Never Never	Hoover/Fisher	Canary Street	9781335004888	13,117
8	4	The Last Thing He Told Me	Laura Dave	S&S/Rucci	9781501171352	12,897
9	7	The Midnight Library	Matt Haig	Penguin Books	9780525559498	11,666
10	8	Heart Bones	Colleen Hoover	Atria	9781668021910	11,403
11	10	Things We Hide from the Light	Lucy Score	Bloom	9781728276113	9,737
12	13	King of Wrath	Ana Huang	Bloom	9781728289724	8,836
13	15	Twisted Games	Ana Huang	Bloom	9781728274874	8,381
14	11	Trust	Hernan Diaz	Riverhead	9780593420324	7,318
15	12	Wrong Place Wrong Time	Gillian McAllister	Morrow	9780063252356	7,238
16	–	Once More with Feeling	Elissa Sussman	Dell	9780593357378	6,403
17	30	Twisted Lies	Ana Huang	Bloom	9781728274898	6,138
18	29	Twisted Hate	Ana Huang	Bloom	9781728274881	5,929
19	16	Run, Rose, Run	Parton/Patterson	Grand Central	9781538723968	5,928
20	18	The Invisible Life of Addie Larue	V.E. Schwab	Tor	9780765387578	5,471

LW: rank last week

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Children's Frontlist Fiction

RANK	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	ISBN	UNITS
1	**Cherish**	Tracy Wolff	Entangled	9781649373168	27,422
2	**Twenty Thousand Fleas Under the Sea** (Dog Man #11)	Dav Pilkey	Graphix	9781338801910	22,999
3	**FGTeeV: Out of Time!**	FGTeeV	HarperAlley	9780063260504	12,484
4	**The Sun and the Star**	Riordan/Oshiro	Disney-Hyperion	9781368081153	9,809
5	**Girls Like Girls**	Hayley Kiyoko	Wednesday	9781250817631	7,394
6	**The One and Only Ruby**	Katherine Applegate	HarperCollins	9780063080089	7,052
7	**The Little Mermaid Novelization**	Faith Noelle	Disney Press	9781368077231	5,318
8	**Better Than the Movies**	Lynn Painter	Simon & Schuster	9781534467637	4,708
9	**Collaborations** (Cat Kid Comic Club #4)	Dav Pilkey	Graphix	9781338846621	4,520
10	**Diper Överlöde** (Diary of a Wimpy Kid #17)	Jeff Kinney	Amulet	9781419762949	4,366
11	**Mary Anne's Bad Luck Mystery** (The Baby-Sitters Club Graphic Novel #13)	Martin/Cheng	Graphix	9781338616101	3,989
12	**One of Us Is Lying**	Karen M. McManus	Delacorte	9781524714758	3,771
13	**As Good as Dead**	Holly Jackson	Ember	9780593379882	3,689
14	**Moon Rising** (Wings of Fire Graphic Novel #6)	Sutherland/Holmes	Graphix	9781338730890	3,624
15	**The Adventures of Captain Underpants** (anniv. ed.)	Dav Pilkey	Scholastic	9781338865394	3,365
16	**Earth Called** (Tales of a New World #4)	P.C. Cast	Wednesday	9781250879431	3,137
17	**The Hawthorne Legacy**	Jennifer Lynn Barnes	Little, Brown	9780316105187	3,033
18	**The Little Mermaid: Against the Tide**	J. Elle	Disney Press	9781368077224	2,907
19	**The Island**	Natasha Preston	Delacorte	9780593481493	2,855
20	**Surprisingly Sarah**	Terri Libenson	HC/Balzer + Bray	9780063139213	2,754
21	**Five Nights at Freddy's** (Fazbear Frights Graphic Novel Collection #1)	Scott Cawthon	Graphix	9781338792676	2,753
22	**Five Nights at Freddy's** (Fazbear Frights Graphic Novel Collection #2)	Scott Cawthon	Graphix	9781338792706	2,640
23	**You'd Be Home Now**	Kathleen Glasgow	Ember	9780525708070	2,469
24	**I Survived the Great Chicago Fire, 1871**	Lauren Tarshis	Graphix	9781338825152	2,418
25	**Solitaire**	Alice Oseman	Scholastic Press	9781338863420	2,326

Children's Picture Books

RANK	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	ISBN	UNITS
1	**Oh, the Places You'll Go!**	Dr. Seuss	Random House	9780679805274	30,997
2	**Taylor Swift**	Loggia/Chavarri	Golden	9780593566718	14,785
3	**Why a Daughter Needs a Dad**	Lang/Hanson	Sourcebooks Wonderland	9781492667834	12,116
4	**The Very Hungry Caterpillar**	Eric Carle	Philomel	9780399226908	10,222
5	**Kindergarten, Here I Come!**	Steinberg/Chambers	Grosset & Dunlap	9780448456249	9,757
6	**Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?**	Martin/Carle	Holt	9780805047905	9,650
7	**Why a Son Needs a Dad**	Lang/Lankford-Moran	Sourcebooks Wonderland	9781728235875	8,064
8	**I Love You to the Moon and Back**	Hepworth/Warnes	Tiger Tales	9781589255517	7,347
9	**Goodnight Moon**	Brown/Hurd	HarperFestival	9780694003617	7,250
10	**First Grade, Here I Come!**	Steinberg/Bishop	Grosset & Dunlap	9780448489209	7,122
11	**Chicka Chicka Boom Boom**	Martin/Archambault/Ehlert	Little Simon	9781442450707	6,985
12	**The Night Before Kindergarten**	Wing/Durrell	Grosset & Dunlap	9780448425009	5,747
13	**I Love You Like No Otter**	Rossner/Hanson	Sourcebooks Wonderland	9781728213743	5,722
14	**I Wish You More**	Rosenthal/Lichtenheld	Chronicle	9781452126999	5,412
15	**I Love Dad with the Very Hungry Caterpillar**	Eric Carle	World of Eric Carle	9781524785895	5,186
16	**Guess How Much I Love You**	McBratney/Jeram	Candlewick	9781536210637	5,124
17	**The Wonderful Things You Will Be**	Emily Winfield Martin	Random House	9780385376716	5,101
18	**You're My Little Cuddle Bug**	Edwards/Marshall	Silver Dolphin	9781684122585	4,785
19	**Bluey 5-Minute Stories**	–	Penguin Young Readers	9780593521908	4,342
20	**Your Baby's First Word Will Be Dada**	Fallon/Ordóñez	Feiwel and Friends	9781250071811	3,999
21	**Because I Had a Teacher**	Yamada/Santoso	Compendium	9781943200085	3,987
22	**The Giving Tree**	Shel Silverstein	HarperCollins	9780060256654	3,986
23	**Dinosaur, Dinosaur, Say Good Night**	–	Tiger Tales	9781680105896	3,966
24	**Where's Spot?**	Eric Hill	Warne	9780399240461	3,855
25	**A Is for Apple**	–	Tiger Tales	9781589258723	3,852

Category Bestsellers | APRIL 30–JUNE 1, 2023

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Mystery

RANK	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	ISBN	FORMAT
1	Dark Angel	John Sandford	Putnam	9780593422410	Hardcover
2	The Maid	Nita Prose	Ballantine	9780593356173	Trade Paperback
3	Countdown	Patterson/DuBois	Little, Brown	9780316457378	Hardcover
4	The Thursday Murder Club	Richard Osman	Penguin	9781984880987	Trade Paperback
5	Livid	Patricia Cornwell	Grand Central	9781538725184	Trade Paperback
6	In Plain Sight	C.J. Box	Putnam	9780399575730	Mass Market
7	Armored	Mark Greaney	Berkley	9780593436905	Mass Market
8	Storm Watch	C.J. Box	Putnam	9780593331309	Hardcover
9	Under the Lake	Stuart Woods	Putnam	9780451233462	Mass Market
10	All Good People Here	Ashley Flowers	Bantam	9780593496473	Hardcover

Romance

RANK	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	ISBN	FORMAT
1	Happy Place	Emily Henry	Berkley	9780593441275	Hardcover
2	It Ends with Us	Colleen Hoover	Atria	9781501110368	Trade Paperback
3	It Starts with Us	Colleen Hoover	Atria	9781668001226	Trade Paperback
4	Meet Me at the Lake	Carley Fortune	Berkley	9780593438558	Trade Paperback
5	Ugly Love	Colleen Hoover	Atria	9781476753188	Trade Paperback
6	Never Never	Hoover/Fisher	Canary Street	9781335004888	Trade Paperback
7	Icebreaker	Hannah Grace	Atria	9781668026038	Trade Paperback
8	Heart Bones	Colleen Hoover	Atria	9781668021910	Trade Paperback
9	Twisted Love	Ana Huang	Bloom	9781728274867	Trade Paperback
10	Things We Never Got Over	Lucy Score	Bloom	9781945631832	Trade Paperback

Science Fiction

RANK	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	ISBN	FORMAT
1	This Is How You Lose the Time War	El-Mohtar/Gladstone	Saga	9781534430990	Trade Paperback
2	Fractal Noise	Christopher Paolini	Tor	9781250862488	Hardcover
3	Project Hail Mary	Andy Weir	Ballantine	9780593135228	Trade Paperback
4	Dune	Frank Herbert	Ace	9780441013593	Trade Paperback
5	The Three-Body Problem	Cixin Liu	Tor	9780765382030	Trade Paperback
6	Dune	Frank Herbert	Ace	9780441172719	Mass Market
7	Gideon the Ninth	Tamsyn Muir	Tordotcom	9781250313188	Trade Paperback
8	Star Wars Jedi: Battle Scars	Sam Maggs	Random House Worlds	9780593598603	Hardcover
9	Station Eleven	Emily St. John Mandel	Vintage	9780804172448	Trade Paperback
10	Jurassic Park	Michael Crichton	Ballantine	9780345538987	Mass Market

Fantasy

RANK	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	ISBN	FORMAT
1	Fourth Wing	Rebecca Yarros	Red Tower	9781649374042	Hardcover
2	A Court of Thorns and Roses	Sarah J. Maas	Bloomsbury	9781635575569	Trade Paperback
3	A Court of Mist and Fury	Sarah J. Maas	Bloomsbury	9781635575583	Trade Paperback
4	The Invisible Life of Addie Larue	V.E. Schwab	Tor	9780765387578	Trade Paperback
5	A Court of Wings and Ruin	Sarah J. Maas	Bloomsbury	9781635575606	Trade Paperback
6	A Court of Silver Flames	Sarah J. Maas	Bloomsbury	9781635577990	Trade Paperback
7	A Court of Frost and Starlight	Sarah J. Maas	Bloomsbury	9781635575620	Trade Paperback
8	In the Lives of Puppets	TJ Klune	Tor	9781250217448	Hardcover
9	The Priory of the Orange Tree	Samantha Shannon	Bloomsbury	9781635570304	Trade Paperback
10	The Assasin's Blade	Sarah J. Maas	Bloomsbury	9781639731091	Trade Paperback

ALA COMES HOME

The highly anticipated 2023 ALA Annual Conference is set for June 22–27 in the group's hometown of Chicago

ALA ANNUAL
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CHICAGO
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ALA American Library Association

By Andrew Richard Albanese

The 2023 American Library Association Annual Conference has long been circled on calendars as the conference to watch. After a solid showing at last year's annual conference in Washington, D.C. (where attendance topped 13,000), this year's event, set for Thursday–Tuesday, June 22–27, in the ALA's hometown of Chicago, is expected to speak volumes about the state of libraries and the future of the association's in-person events.

Lessa Kanani'opua Pelayo-Lozada

Emily Drabinksi

"We are outpacing last year in terms of exhibitor and attendee registrations," says ALA president Lessa Kanani'opua Pelayo-Lozada, who is quick to credit ALA members and conference organizers with putting together a strong program to meet a critical moment for libraries. "I was just wowed by all of the program proposals we received. We have more than 200 education programs on the schedule, and the topics are so timely. We're going to be talking about censorship. We're talking about health and wellness, and trauma. We're talking about our important EDI efforts in libraries. We're talking about prison libraries. There are some really difficult topics on the schedule for this year, but we've set this conference up to be inspiring, which is what library workers and library supporters need it to be."

This year's annual conference also represents something of a test for ALA as an organization. When the pandemic hit, ALA was facing a serious financial challenge and was already in the midst of a bylaws revision and a membership-driven strategic plan to modernize the association. In 2023, Pelayo-Lozada says, the association, under the leadership of executive director Tracie D. Hall, is turning a corner in terms of its recovery from the pandemic shutdowns and in its forward-facing modernization efforts. "In addition to facing some major challenges head-on, we've been able to look at ourselves internally at ALA and figure out what our future should look like," she adds. "I didn't start this work, of course, but I've been working hard with our members and staff to make ALA more nimble, more member friendly, and less bureaucratic. And to see a lot of that work come to fruition is really encouraging."

Incoming ALA president Emily Drabinksi, a critical pedagogy librarian at the Graduate Center at the City University of New York, also acknowledges that librarians will be gathering in Chicago at an important juncture. "I think we need to be together with one another now more than maybe ever before," she says. "With the pandemic and all the book bans and censorship attempts, librarians and library workers have really been through the wringer. I think the conference is going to be a profoundly important and moving experience."

Drabinski, whose ALA presidential term will begin at the end of conference, is ready and eager to get to work. "I believe that a well-resourced library with library workers that are supported is key to our communities—I ran for ALA president for that reason," she says, adding that there couldn't be a more important time for an association like ALA to make a difference. "How can we organize effectively on behalf of libraries as a public institution, as a public good? Because every square inch of a city that's a library is a square inch that's not a jail, that's not a parking lot, that's something that makes life better for people. I want to make the case that libraries are worth fighting for, affirmatively."

And despite a political "culture war" narrative that has for some reason targeted libraries, the public, Drabinski insists, understands the value of libraries and supports them. "Libraries today stand for what we have always stood for, which is equitable access to information for everyone," she says. "If you ask people what they think of when they think of the library they think of storytimes and bestselling books, broadband internet, or help with their small business. That's the truth of libraries."

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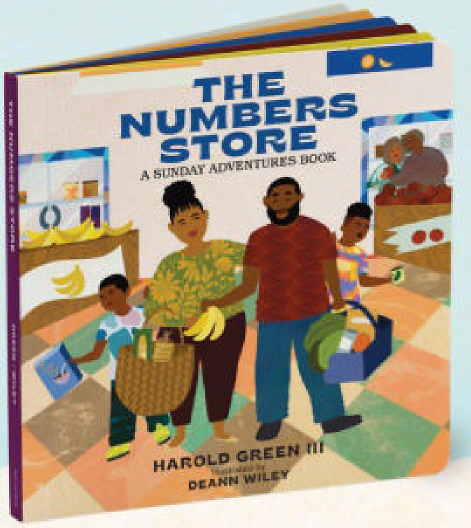

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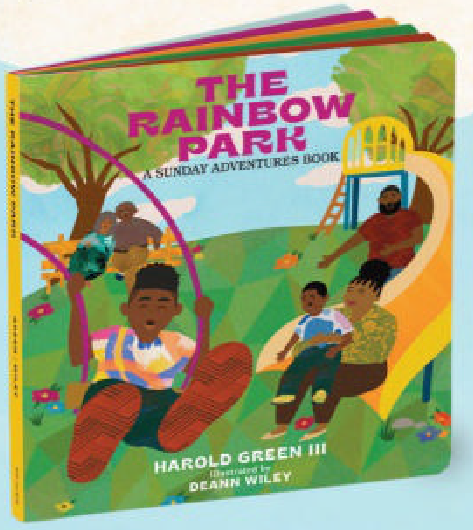

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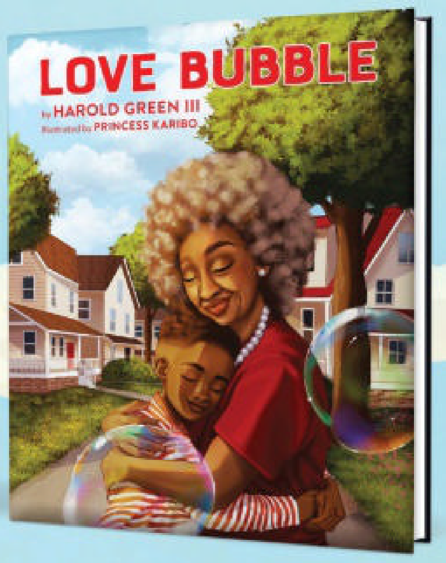

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Featured speakers

Judy Blume

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The 2023 ALA Annual Conference main speaker program will take place in the McCormick Place Chicago convention center auditorium (W375c-e/Skyline) and will kick off with some serious star power: renowned author **Judy Blume** in conversation with Simon & Schuster senior v-p and publisher **Justin Chanda** (Friday, 4–5:30 p.m.). Blume's 29 books—including *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret*, which was recently adapted into a film—have sold more than 90 million copies worldwide in 39 languages.

The discussion promises to explore a number of important topics and issues, including the freedom to read and write in this unprecedented era of book bans and legislative restrictions. Blume's books have landed on ALA's Most Challenged Books lists over the years, and she continues to be a vocal advocate against censorship.

Maysoon Zayid

© MICHELLE KINNEY

Maysoon Zayid will open the main speaker program on Saturday (9–10 a.m.). A comedian, actor, and well-known disability advocate, Zayid is as one of America's pioneering Muslim women comedians and has a recurring character on *General Hospital*. She is also the author of the bestselling memoir *Find Another Dream*, and her debut graphic novel for young readers, *Shiny Misfits* (illustrated by Shadia Amin) will be published in 2024 by Scholastic.

Cara Mentzel (l.) and Idina Menzel

© JOE RUSSO

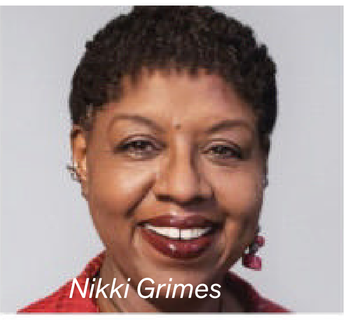
Next up, sisters **Cara Mentzel** and **Idina Menzel** will take the stage in conversation with **John Schu**, author of numerous books including *This Is a School* (11 a.m.–noon). Cara Mentzel is the author of the memoir *Voice Lessons: A Sisters Story*, about her relationship with her superstar sister, Idina (yes, they spell their last names differently). She is also a former elementary school teacher.

Idina Menzel is an actor, singer-songwriter, philanthropist, entrepreneur, and author, and is probably best known for her performance as Elsa in Disney's Frozen movies. In their talk, the sisters will share the inspiration behind their new book, *Proud Mouse* (Disney, Sept.), which the publisher describes as a "lyrical picture book about a proud sister learning to find her own way."

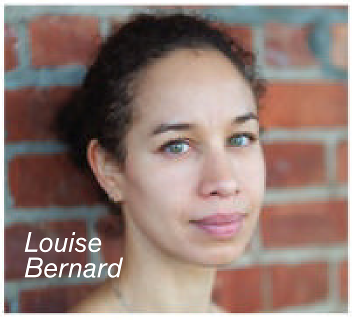
The program continues with **Nikki Grimes** and **Brian Pinkney**, who will discuss their book *A Walk in the Woods*, due out in September from Neal Porter Books. Grimes is the author of numerous books, including the Coretta Scott King Book Award winner *Bronx Masquerade*. Among her many other honors, she is a recipient of the Virginia A. Hamilton Lifetime Achievement Award, the ALAN Award for outstanding contributions to young adult literature, the Children's Literature Legacy Award, the Virginia Hamilton Literary Award, and the NCTE Award for Excellence in Poetry for Children.

Brian Pinkney has illustrated many books for children, including *Duke Ellington*, written by his wife, Andrea Pinkney, and **The Faithful Friend** by Robert D. San Souci, both of which received Caldecott Honors. He also received the Coretta Scott King Book Award for *In the Time of the Drums* by Kim L. Siegelson. And he is of course the son of the legendary Jerry Pinkney—the original illustrator of *A Walk in the Woods*, which Brian finished after his father's death in 2022.

On Sunday, the slate begins with an inside look at the Obama Presidential Center, which broke ground in Chicago in September 2021. This special session will feature Obama Presidential Center Museum director **Louise Bernard** and Chicago Public Library commissioner **Chris Brown** in conversation with librarian of Congress **Carla Hayden** (10:30–11:30 a.m.). Scheduled for a 2025 grand opening, the much-heralded center is a historic endeavor that will enrich Chicago's South Side—it will feature acres of parkland, a children's playground area, and


Nikki Grimes

Brian Pinkney


Louise Bernard

Chris Brown

Carla Hayden

Rick Riordan

Mark Oshiro

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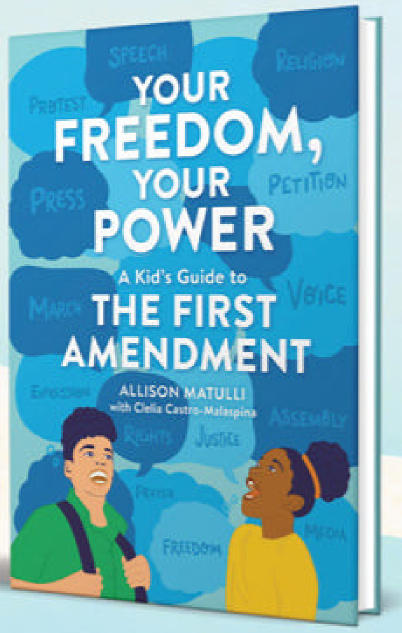
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ALLISON MATULLI
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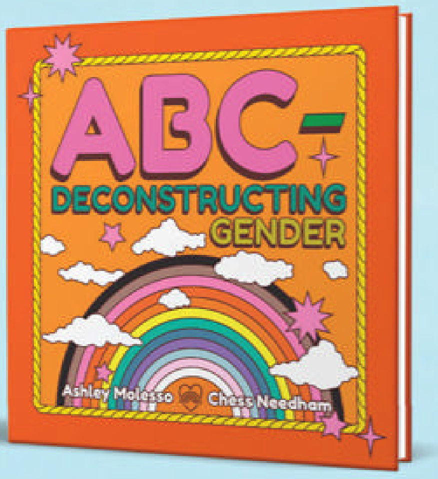

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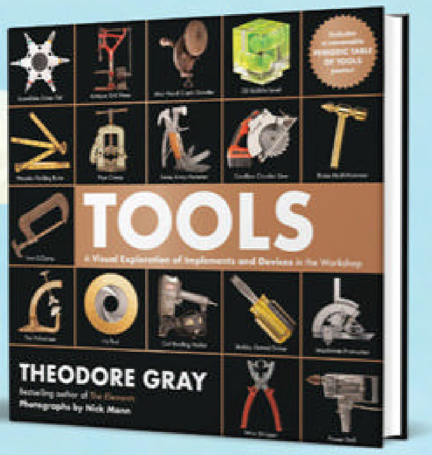

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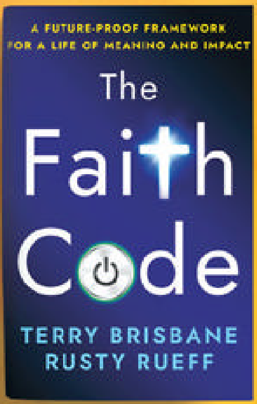
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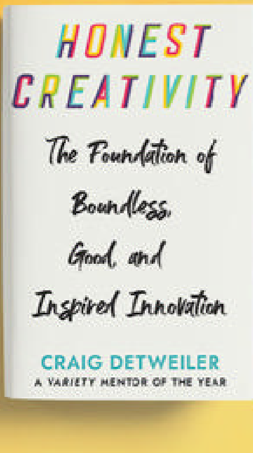
RUSTY RUEFF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The Foundation of Boundless, Good, and Inspired Innovation
CRAIG DETWEILER
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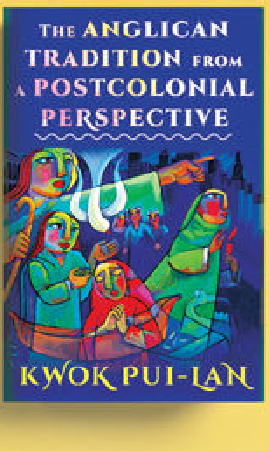
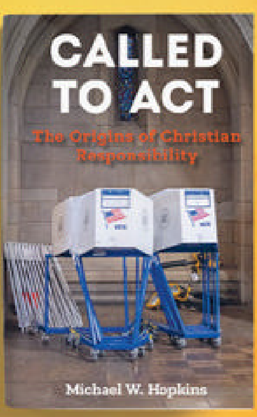

THE ANGLICAN TRADITION FROM A POSTCOLONIAL PERSPECTIVE
KWOK PUI-LAN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large event spaces for performances, in addition to a museum and library research complex that will, according to the center's website, "explore the fullness of the American story."

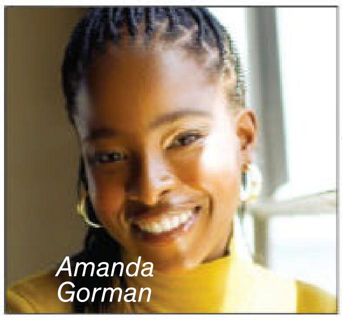
That afternoon, authors **Rick Riordan** and **Mark Oshiro** will take the stage (1–2 p.m.) to discuss their new book, *The Sun and the Star: A Nico Di Angelo Adventure* (Disney-Hyperion). The standalone fantasy novel follows Nico Di Angelo (the son of Hades) and his boyfriend, Will Solace (the son of Apollo), as their relationship is tested.

Riordan—once dubbed "the storyteller of the gods" by *PW*—is the author of five bestselling middle grade series with millions of copies sold throughout the world, including Percy Jackson and the Olympians, The Heroes of Olympus, The Trials of Apollo, the Kane Chronicles, and Magnus Chase and the Gods of Asgard. Riordan is also the publisher of an imprint at Disney-Hyperion that is dedicated to highlighting fiction that features world cultures and mythologies.

Oshiro is the author of **Anger Is a Gift**, winner of the 2019 Schneider Family Book Award, and *Each of Us A Desert*, an NPR Best Book of 2020, among other young adult titles. He also contributed a short story to the Star Wars anthology *The Empire Strikes Back: From a Certain Point of View*.

The 2023 annual ALA President's Program (Sunday, 3:30–5 p.m.) will feature ALA president **Lessa Kanani'opua Pelayo-Lozada** and filmmaker and author **Hinaleimoana Wong-Kalu** in a discussion about Native Hawaiian philosophy and traditions, and about the contributions Wong-Kalu has made to both the Native Hawaiian and LGBTQ communities. Wong-Kalu is a Native Hawaiian mahu, a traditional "third-gender person" who occupies "a place in the middle" between male and female, traditionally seen as a teacher of ancient traditions. Wong-Kalu's first children's picture book, *Kapaemahu*, written with Dean Hamer and Joe Wilson and illustrated by Daniel Souda, was awarded the Stonewall Honor and was a Lambda Literary finalist.

Hinaleimoana Wong-Kalu


Amanda Gorman

© DANNY WILLIAMS

Christian Robinson

© JOHN KWIATKOWSKI

And there is more star power to end the main speaker program: this year's closing general session will feature **Amanda Gorman** and **Christian Robinson**, who will discuss their forthcoming children's book *Something, Someday*, due out in September from Viking (Tuesday, 11 a.m.–noon). Gorman is the youngest presidential inaugural poet in U.S. history and the bestselling author of numerous books, including *The Hill We Climb*, which made headlines recently when a single complaint

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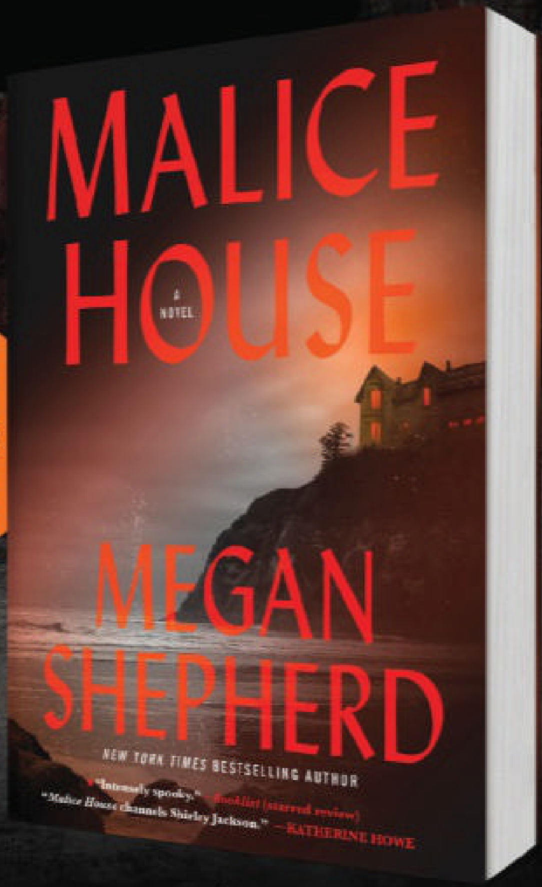
MALICE HOUSE
A NOVEL
MEGAN SHEPHERD
NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR
"Intensely spooky." —Booklist (starred review)
"Malice House channels Shirley Jackson." —KATHERINE HOWE

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★"An intensely spooky and scary tale about the power of stories and the art of creation. Highly recommended."

—*Booklist* on *Malice House* (starred review)

HYPERION AVENUE

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alleging the book contained "hate messages" was enough to get it removed from circulation in a Florida school library.

Illustrator Christian Robinson's accolades include a Caldecott Honor and a Coretta Scott King Honor Award for his art in *Last Stop on Market Street*, written by Matt de la Peña.

Virtual programs, exhibits, and more

ALA definitely leveled up its online programming during the pandemic, and those skills have since helped level up the virtual conference experience for members who can't travel. Once again, the 2023 ALA Annual Conference will feature a robust online component, dubbed the Digital Experience, with simulcasts of the main stage speakers, dozens of education sessions, and some high-profile, virtual-only speakers.

Graham Norton

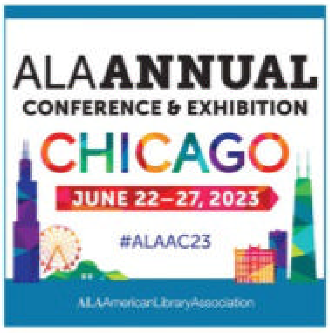
Graham Norton will headline this year's virtual programming with an exclusive online talk. A broadcaster, author, and comedian, Norton is the host of *The Graham Norton Show* on BBC One. He is also the author of multiple novels, including *Forever Home*, which will be published in the U.S. by HarperCollins in September.

A bustling exhibit hall—the Library Marketplace—will be the centerpiece of the 2023 ALA Annual Conference. This year's show floor will host some 600 exhibits, and more than 300 experts, authors, and illustrators set to appear on eight live stages, as well as hundreds of Meet the Author booth sessions, book and galley giveaways, and autograph and selfie opportunities.

The exhibits open with a reception on Friday at 5:30 p.m., immediately following the opening session.

And finally, check the conference website for a host of available tours and ticketed events—including a reception honoring the winners of the ALA's adult book award, the Andrew Carnegie Medals for Fiction and Nonfiction, on Saturday, 7–10 p.m., at the American Writers Museum. Presented by Booklist and RUSA (and supported by NoveList and a grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York), this year's reception will honor winners **Julie Otsuka** and **Ed Yong**, and will feature acclaimed novelist and poet **Chris Abani** as the keynote speaker. The event will kick off with a cocktail hour and close with a reception and book signing.

As always, check the online program for exact times and any last-minute changes or additions. ■



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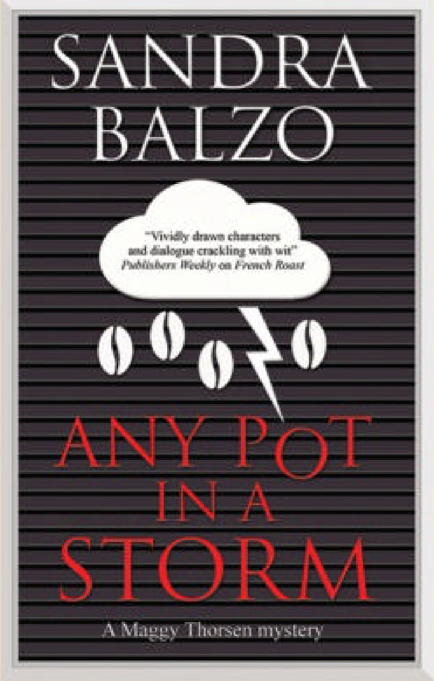
SANDRA
BALZO
"Vividly drawn characters
and dialogue crackling with wit"
Publishers Weekly on French Roast
ANY POT
IN A
STORM
A Maggy Thorsen mystery

A Maggy Thorsen Mystery
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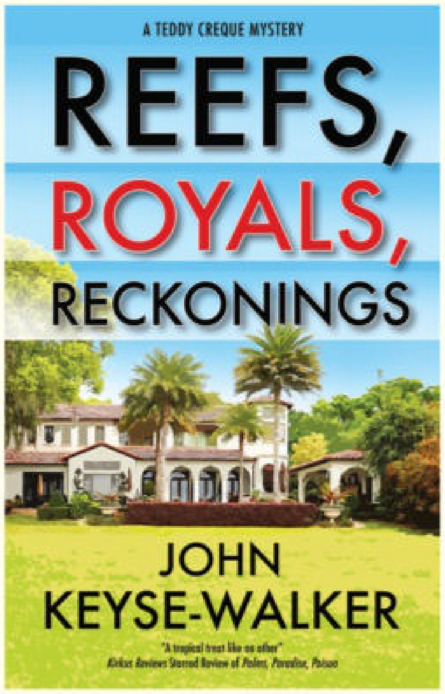
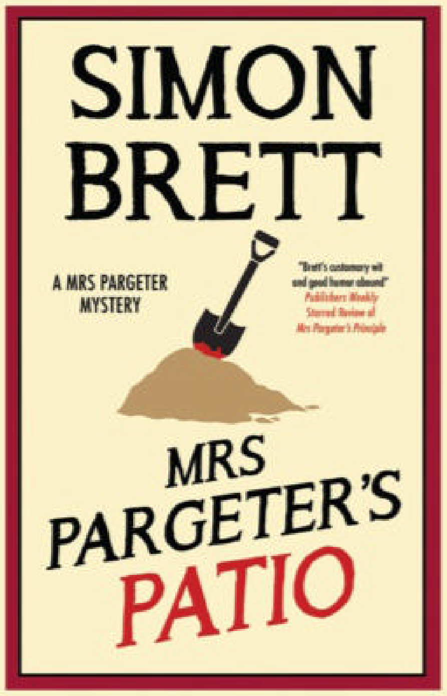
September 5, 2023


A TEDDY CREQUE MYSTERY
REEFS,
ROYALS,
RECKONINGS
JOHN
KEYSE-WALKER
"A tropical treat like no other"
Kirkus Reviews Starred Review of Palms, Paradise, Poison

A Teddy Creque Mystery
9781448311248 | HC
September 5, 2023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A MRS PARGETER
MYSTERY
"Brett's customary wit
and good humor abound"
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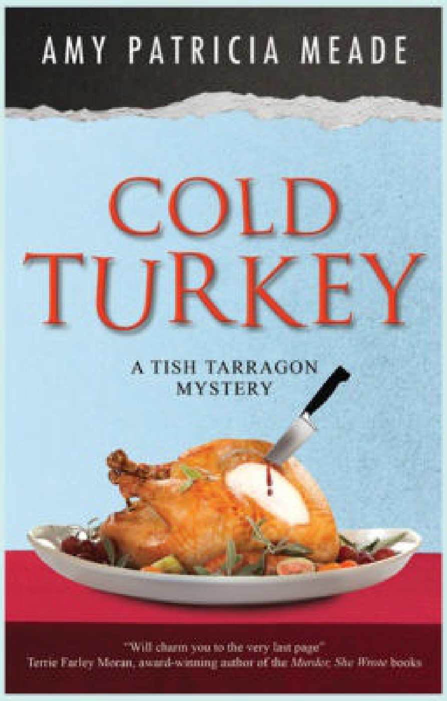
THE LIGHTER SIDE OF MURDER

COZY MYSTERIES COMING THIS FALL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MYSTERY
"Will charm you to the very last page"
Terrie Farley Moran, award-winning author of the Murder, She Wrote books

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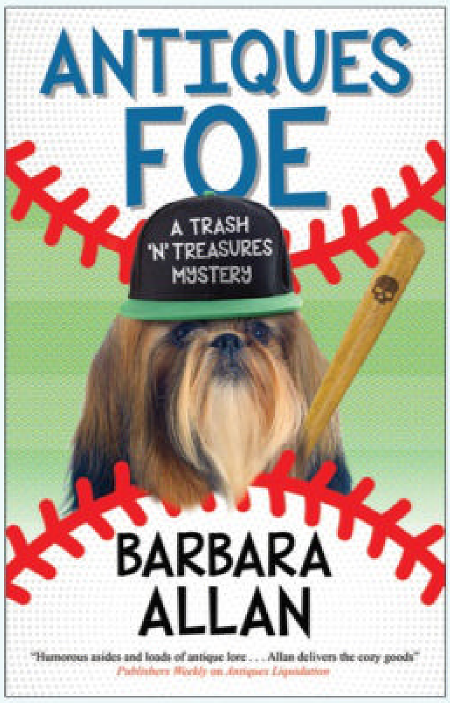
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A TRASH
'N' TREASURES
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"Humorous asides and loads of antique lore . . . Allan delivers the cozy goods"
Publishers Weekly on Antiques Liquidation

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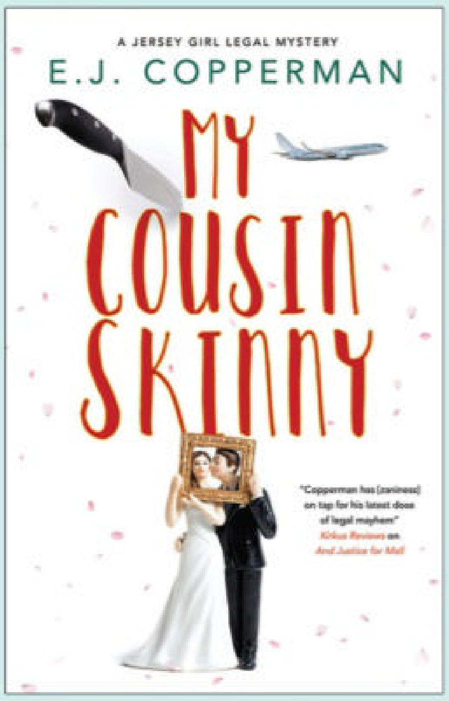
A JERSEY GIRL LEGAL MYSTERY
E.J. COPPERMAN
MY
COUSIN
SKINNY
"Copperman has (zaniness)
on tap for his latest dose
of legal mayhem"
Kirkus Reviews on
And Justice for Mall

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PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

FIGHTING BACK AGAINST BOOK BANS

The 2023 ALA Annual Conference & Exhibition, which runs Thursday–Tuesday, June 22–27, will feature one of the most robust—and important—slates of programming in years, with more than 200 programs on tap in a range of formats addressing a host of urgent topics facing libraries. For the full, up-to-date schedule, check the ALA conference program at 2023.alaannual.org. This year's conference features an especially strong lineup of programs responding to the ongoing nationwide surge in book bans and legislative challenges to the freedom to read, a sampling of which are rounded up below.

A Rally for the Right to Read: Uniting for Libraries & Intellectual Freedom

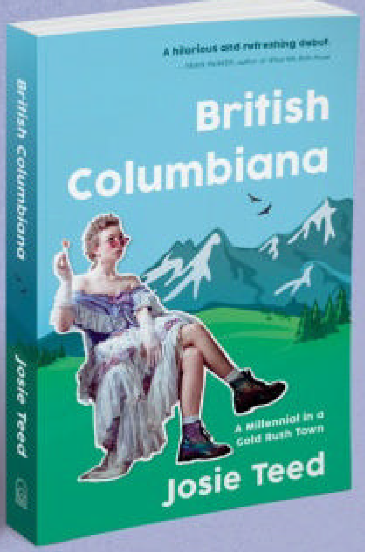
Thursday, 6–9 p.m., Hilton Chicago, Boulevard Room

This special pre-ALA event will feature anti-censorship activists from around the nation and will honor the 2023 recipients of the ALA's intellectual freedom awards. The rally will include an appearance from **Ibram X. Kendi**, author of numerous bestselling books, including *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America*, which won the 2016 National Book Award for Nonfiction, and the international bestseller *How to Be an Antiracist*. This is a ticketed event, but tickets are free and can be obtained via the ALA annual conference website.

Ibram X. Kendi

This Time, It's Personal

A quarter-life crisis leads to a job in a remote town frozen in the past

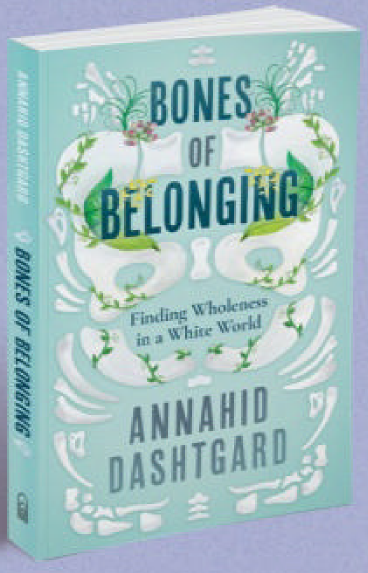

A hilarious and refreshing debut
British Columbiana
A Millennial in a Gold Rush Town
Josie Teed

9781459750210

"Teed has a keen observational eye."

— ANDRÉ FORGET, author of *In the City of Pigs*

Being a Brown woman working for change in a white world

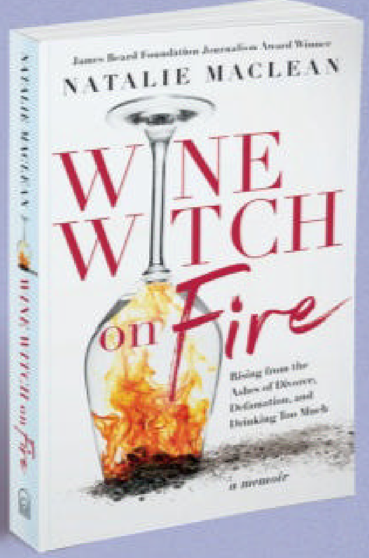

BONES OF BELONGING
Finding Wholeness in a White World
ANNAHID DASHTGARD

9781459750623

"Essential reading for anyone wanting to invest in a more inclusive planet."

— CLAYTON THOMAS-MÜLLER, author of *Life in the City of Dirty Water*

Rising above cancel culture in the wine industry


James Beard Foundation Journalism Award Winner
NATALIE MACLEAN
WINE WITCH on Fire
Rising from the Ashes of Divorce, Defamation, and Drinking Too Much
a memoir

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"Zesty, vibrant, meditative."

— FRANCES MAYES, author of *Under the Tuscan Sun*

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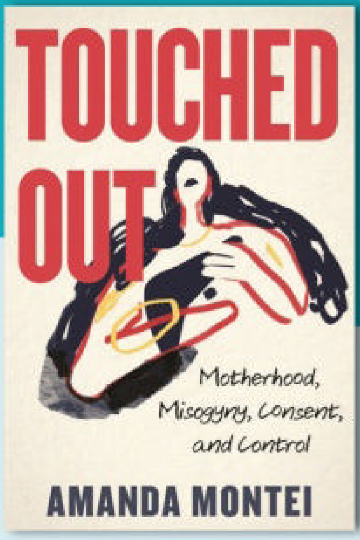
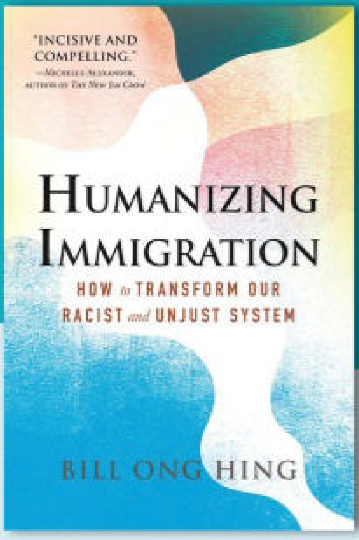

TOUCHED OUT
Motherhood, Misogyny, Consent, and Control
AMANDA MONTEI

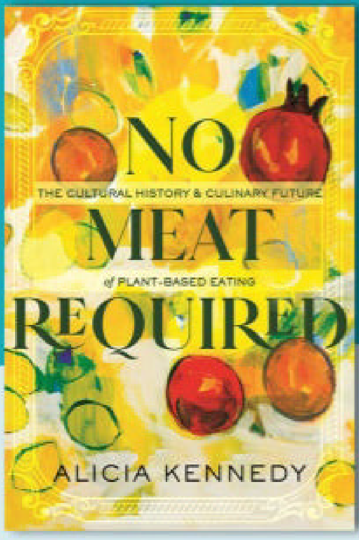
SEPTEMBER 2023

"A brilliant and timely meditation that is an absolute must-read for any woman who has ever felt her body is not her own anymore"
—KATE MANNE, author of *Down Girl*


"INCISIVE AND COMPELLING."
—MICHELLE ALEXANDER, author of The New Jim Crow
HUMANIZING IMMIGRATION
HOW to TRANSFORM OUR RACIST and UNJUST SYSTEM
BILL ONG HING

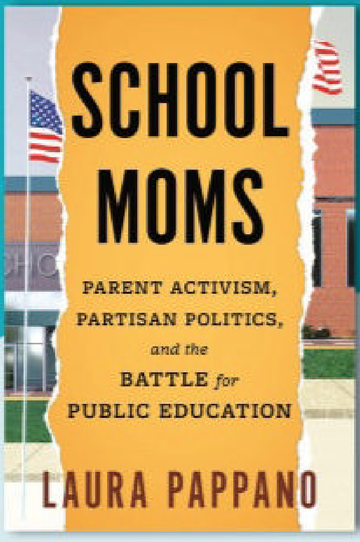
OCTOBER 2023

"A passionate, clear-eyed, and necessary call for restoring justice and humanity in America's broken and corrupt immigration system."
—WAJAHAT ALI, author of *Go Back to Where You Came From*


NO MEAT REQUIRED
THE CULTURAL HISTORY & CULINARY FUTURE of PLANT-BASED EATING
ALICIA KENNEDY

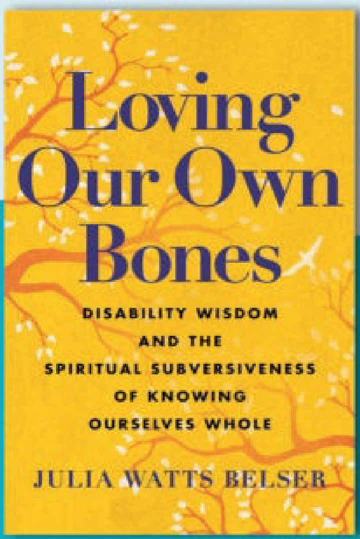
AUGUST 2023

"Everyone, whether vegan, vegetarian, or omnivorous, needs to read this elegantly written, thought-provoking treatise."
—NIGELLA LAWSON


SCHOOL MOMS
PARENT ACTIVISM, PARTISAN POLITICS, and the BATTLE for PUBLIC EDUCATION
LAURA PAPPANO

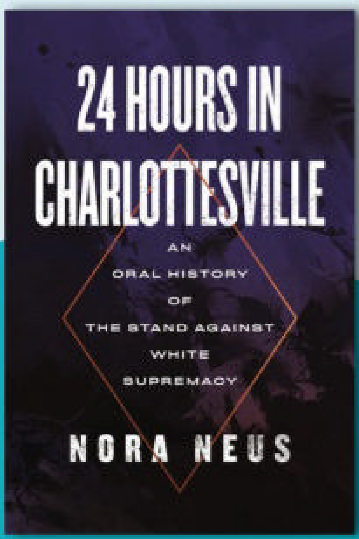
JANUARY 2024

An on-the-ground investigation into the far-right's ongoing attack on education and the battle to control the future of public schools.


Loving Our Own Bones
DISABILITY WISDOM AND THE SPIRITUAL SUBVERSIVENESS OF KNOWING OURSELVES WHOLE
JULIA WATTS BELSER

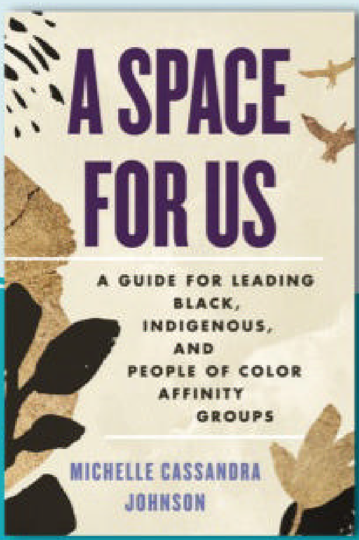
SEPTEMBER 2023

"Beautifully written and accessible. . . profoundly spiritual yet also boldly critical; fiercely angry yet also affirming and joyous."
—JUDITH PLASKOW, co-author of *Goddess and God in the World*


24 HOURS IN CHARLOTTESVILLE
AN ORAL HISTORY OF THE STAND AGAINST WHITE SUPREMACY
NORA NEUS

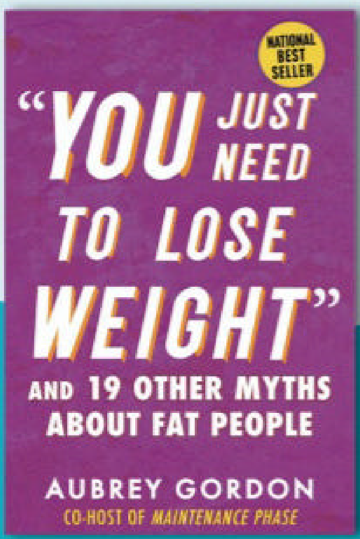
JULY 2023

"Riveting . . . not just a visceral portrayal of political violence, but a major addition to our understanding of right-wing terrorism."
—KIRKUS REVIEWS, starred review


A SPACE FOR US
A GUIDE FOR LEADING BLACK, INDIGENOUS, AND PEOPLE OF COLOR AFFINITY GROUPS
MICHELLE CASSANDRA JOHNSON

AUGUST 2023

"An incredible body of work for Black people, Indigenous people, and People of Color to center healing and restoration. Important. Vital. Right on time."
—JUSTIN MICHAEL WILLIAMS, author of *Stay Woke*


NATIONAL BEST SELLER
"YOU JUST NEED TO LOSE WEIGHT"
AND 19 OTHER MYTHS ABOUT FAT PEOPLE
AUBREY GORDON
CO-HOST OF MAINTENANCE PHASE

ALERT!

"Your Fat Friend," a documentary about Aubrey Gordon makes its premiere at the Tribeca Film Festival in June. Be sure to stock your shelves!

Beacon Press supports librarians and booksellers who are on the frontlines in protecting the freedom to read and learn.

BEACON PRESS Galleys available to download on Edelweiss or come see us at ALA Annual, booth 2516!

Changing the Narrative: ALA Policy Corps Takes On Book Banners

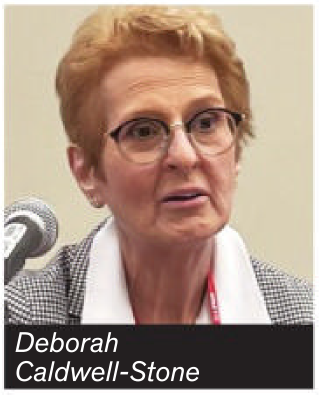
Saturday, 9–10 a.m, McCormick W180

This program will share successful strategies for engaging legislators across the political spectrum as well as practical techniques and tools to best position one's library to take on book banners. The panel will be moderated by former Nashville Public Library director and ALA senior policy fellow **Kent Oliver**, and will feature Maine State librarian **Lori Fisher**; **Amanda Kordeliski**, director of libraries and instructional technology at the Norman (Okla.) Public Schools; **Becky Calzada**, district library coordinator, Leander, Tex., ISD; and **Erin MacFarlane**, legislative committee chair for the Arizona Library Association.

Books Under Fire: Law and the Right to Read, 2023

Saturday, 1–2 p.m. McCormick W180

Attendees will learn all about new laws relating to book banning—and ways to oppose them—from two powerhouse defenders of intellectual freedom: **Deborah Caldwell-Stone**, director of the ALA's Office for Intellectual Freedom, and **Theresa Chmara**, general counsel for the Freedom to Read Foundation, the ALA's First Amendment legal defense arm.


Deborah Caldwell-Stone

SOS: Stock Our Shelves (with Challenged and Banned Books)!

Saturday, 2:30–3:30 p.m., McCormick W187b

This workshop is billed as "an SOS call" to all librarians who are interested in sharing strategies to ensure that children of all ages are offered a variety of texts in their schools and libraries. Participants will connect with colleagues, share their stories, and hear others'. It will be led by **Jen Nails**, multiservices librarian at the Las Vegas–Clark County Library District.

We Need Diverse Books and ALA Present: How to Fight Book Bans: Authors On Speaking Up and Fighting Back

Saturday, 2:30–4 p.m., McCormick W183a

WNDB founding member and CEO **Ellen Oh** will moderate a panel of authors and present concrete ideas for how to respond to censorship attempts in the classroom and the

New Resources for

Special Needs Children and Teens

Facing Mighty Fears About Making Mistakes
Dawn Huebner
My Culture, My Gender, Me
It's Totally Normal!
An LGBTQIA+ Guide to Puberty, Sex, and Gender
Monica Gupta Mehta and Ash Mehta
The Grief Rock
Natasha Daniels
Illustrated by Lily Fossett
Riley the Brave's Big Feelings Activity
Zensations
Frank J. Sileo
Christopher Willard
Pride and Joy

The Grief Rock
A Book to Understand Grief and Love
Natasha Daniels
$15.95, HC, 9781839974397

Riley the Brave's Big Feelings Activity Book
A Trauma-informed Guide for Counselors, Educators and Parents
Jessica Sinarski
$27.95, PB, 9781839973000

My Culture, My Gender, Me
Cassandra Jules Corrigan
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Zensations
Frank J. Sileo and Christopher Willard
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Facing Mighty Fears About Making Mistakes
Dawn Huebner, PhD
$14.95, PB, 9781839974663

It's Totally Normal!
An LGBTQIA+ Guide to Puberty, Sex, and Gender
Kelvin Sparks
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Pride and Joy
A Story About Becoming an LGBTQIA+ Ally
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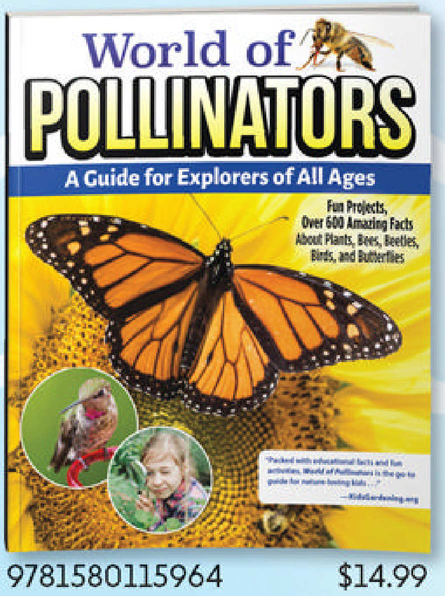
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library, including strategies libraries can implement to gain community support and acquire resources from the publishing and author communities. Joining Oh will be **Kyle Lukoff**, author of the Stonewall Award–winning *When Aidan Became a Brother*; **Samira Ahmed**, bestselling author of *Love, Hate & Other Filters* and the Amira & Hamza middle grade duology; **Ashley Hope Pérez**, author of the bestseller *Out of Darkness* (#9 on the ALA's top 10 most challenged books list for 2022); Jerry Craft, the Newbery Medal–winning author and illustrator of *New Kid*, *Class Act*, and *School Trip*; and Eliot Schrefer, a two-time finalist for the National Book Award in Young People's Literature and the author of *Queer Ducks*, which explores sexuality in the animal kingdom.

How to Navigate Book Challenges in the Teen Services Space

Sunday, 11 a.m.–noon, McCormick W194a

This panel of teen service librarians who have experienced book challenges firsthand will offer resources and advice for pushing back against censorship attempts. Moderated by YALSA president-elect **Colleen Seisser**, this panel will feature **Sheila E. Michaels**, librarian at Nixa (Mo.) High School; Jennie Stevens, adult services librarian at the Thomas Ford Memorial Library in Weston Springs, Ill.; **Rachel Colias**, teen services librarian at the Niles-Maine District Library in Niles, Ill.; and Kathleen Breitenbach, teen librarian at the Hamilton (N.J.) Township Public Library.

United for Libraries President's Program: Emily Amick (Emily in Your Phone)

Sunday, 11a.m.–noon, McCormick W184bc

A former counsel to U.S. Senate majority leader Chuck Schumer, **Emily Amick** (@emilyinyourphone on Instagram) has grown a massive audience on social media by speaking out on some of the nation's most important issues—and her engagement with book banning has made her a powerful advocate for the library community. In this program, Amick will review the current political climate and offer ways that library leaders and supporters can increase awareness and engagement on the essential issues impacting libraries. The session will be moderated by **Gordon N. Baker**, dean of libraries emeritus at Clayton State University.

Help! They're Coming for Our Books!

Sunday, 11 a.m.–noon, McCormick W185a

This panel discussion, sponsored by the ALA's Rainbow Round Table, will discuss the legal rights of libraries and librarians, their experiences facing censorship, and efforts to

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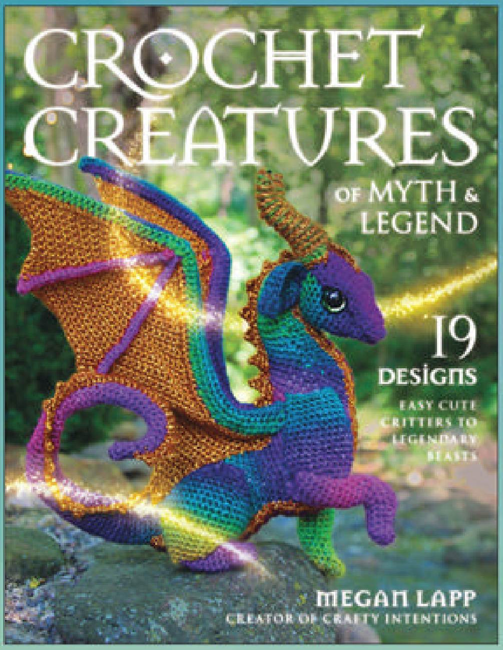
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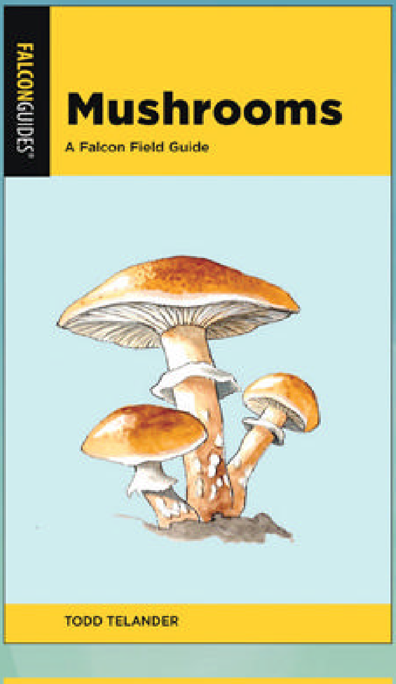
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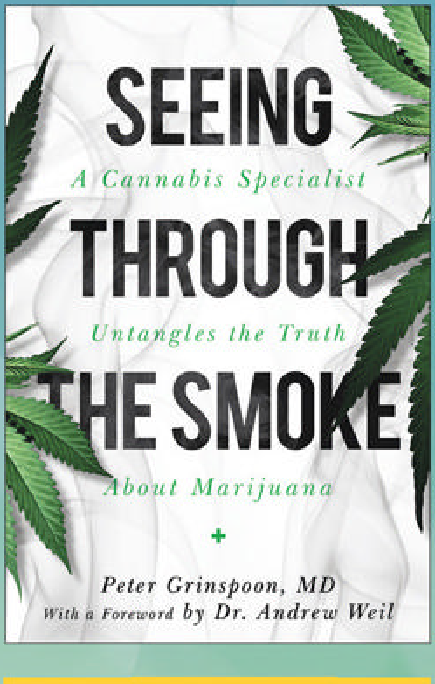
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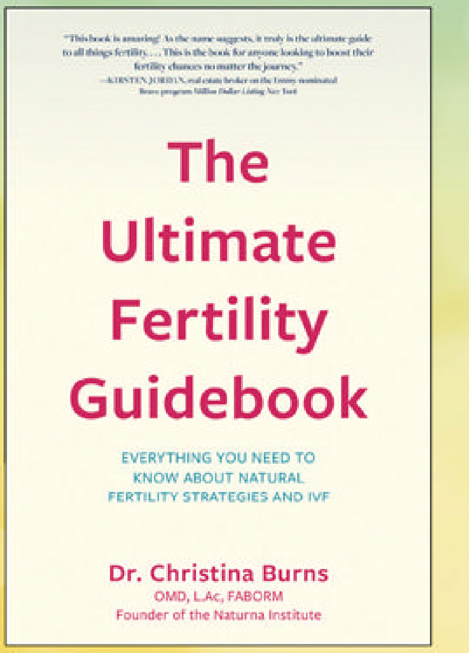
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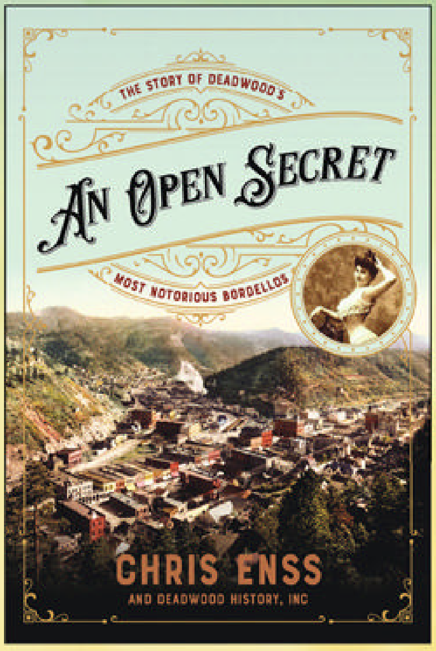
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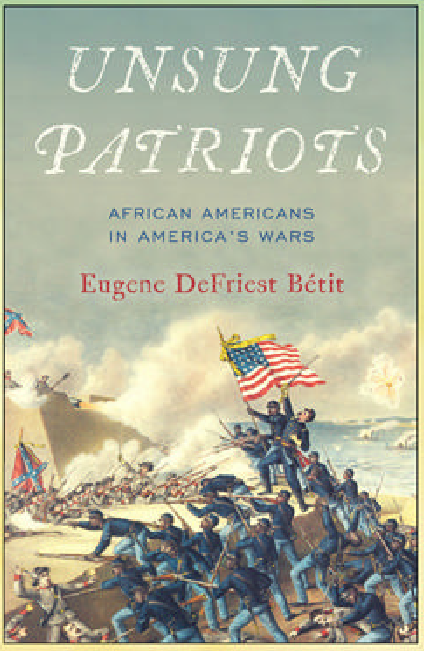
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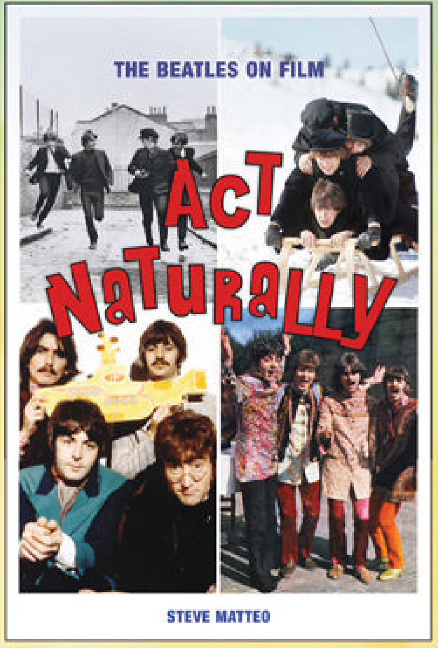
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resist censorship. The program will also highlight the many resources libraries have to fight against the banning of their materials. It will be moderated by **Angela Ocaña**, current chair of the ALA Intellectual Freedom Round Table; **Christine Emeran**, Youth Free Expression program director with the National Coalition Against Censorship; **John Chrastka**, EveryLibrary's founder and executive director; and **Jonathan Friedman**, PEN America's director of free expression and education programs.

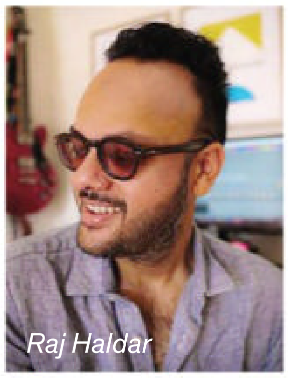
Make the Most of Banned Books Week

Sunday, 1–2 p.m., McCormick W194a

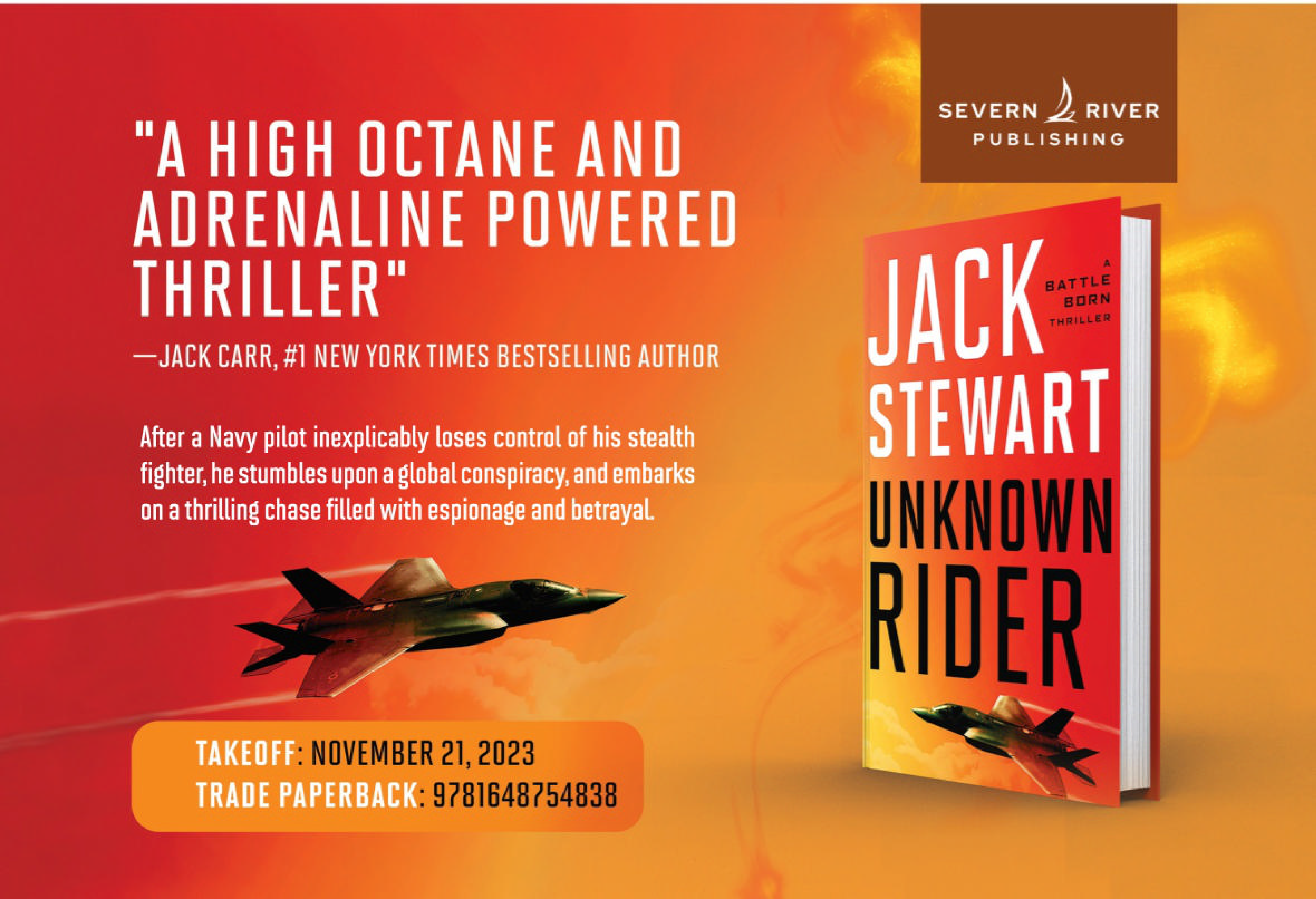
The ALA's Annual Banned Books Week (set for October 1–7) is an opportunity to celebrate and emphasize the importance of the freedom to read. This panel will explore the ways libraries can use Banned Books Week to engage their communities. It will be led by ALA program officer and Banned Books Week coordinator **Betsy Gomez** and will feature **Cheryl Davis**, director of the Youth Free Expression program at the Authors Guild; **Christine Emeran**, director of the Youth Free Expression program at the National Coalition Against Censorship; and **Sarah Miller**, senior coordinator of intellectual freedom and book initiatives for the National Council for Teachers of English.

This Book Is Banned!

Sunday, 3:30–4:20 p.m., Exhibit Hall PopTop Stage (Aisle 1600)


Raj Haldar

This session will feature a conversation between two bestselling picture book authors whose works have been targeted by book bans: **Raj Haldar**, author of *This Book Is Banned*, and **Juno Dawson**, author of *This Book Is Gay*. Also known by his stage name Lushlife, Haldar is a rapper, composer, and producer from Philadelphia. Dawson, who now lives and writes full-time in Brighton, England, is an international-bestselling author of fiction and nonfiction for young adults. *This Book Is Gay* has been frequently targeted by book banners and came in at #10 on the ALA's list of most challenged books in 2022.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BEHIND THE BANS

PW talks with University of Illinois school of information sciences professor Emily Knox

By Andrew Richard Albanese

In 2015, *PW* first interviewed Emily Knox for her then-new *Book Banning in 21st-Century America*, a fascinating exploration of how and why people challenge books and what those challenges tell us about the immense power of reading. An associate professor in the School of Information Sciences at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and board president of the National Coalition Against Censorship, Knox's work studying book bans and censorship is perhaps more important today than ever. *PW* caught up with Knox for the 2023 Libraries Are Essential program at the U.S. Book Show to discuss how book banning has changed in just a few short years—and, perhaps most importantly, why it's changed.

Emily Knox

As someone who studies book bans, did you ever imagine we'd be talking about book bans in America like we are today?

I didn't expect that we would have this huge surge in book bans. There's always been a sort of low level of book challenges. It's an ongoing phenomenon and has been for many, many years. But what we're seeing right now is unprecedented.

Virtually every library and school has well-established processes for challenging books, and in the past challenges tended to be pretty personal. But now we're seeing organized efforts to go around these challenge processes. What's changed?

It's true, book challenges are usually quite individual. Usually someone will say, like, "My kid brought this book home, they looked like they were embarrassed or upset while they were reading it," and a parent would maybe challenge the book with the school or the library.

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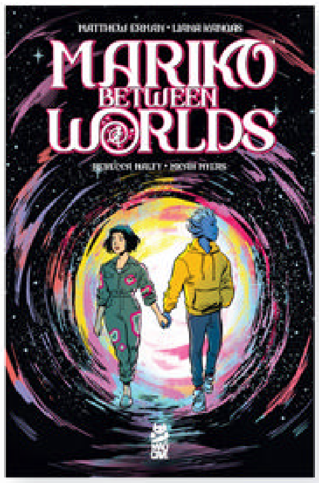
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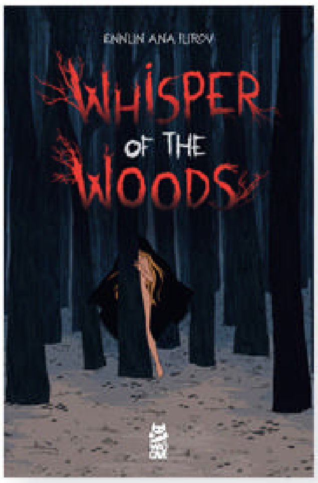
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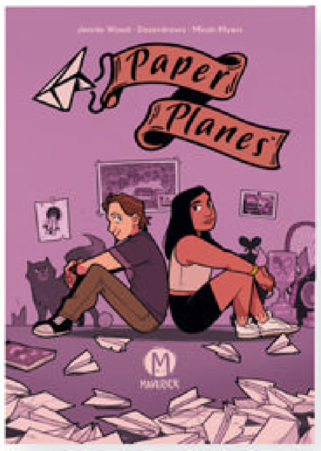
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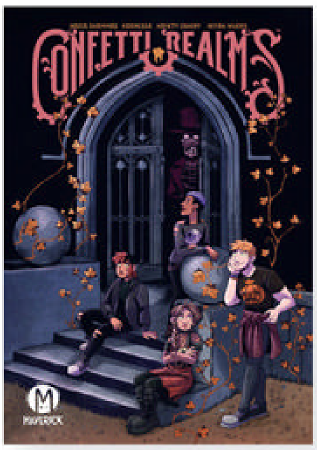
Paper Planes
MAVERICK

Meet The Author:
Jennie Wood
6/24 @ 10:30am in booth #1423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6/24 @ 2pm in ALA Autograph Area

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Creative Team:
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6/25 @ 12pm in the Comics Lounge

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I think what we're really seeing now, across the country, is a broader phenomenon where people are mistrustful of democratic policies and processes. Some people believe they can't get the outcome they want if something actually has to come through a consensus or a majority process. We saw this with January 6, right? So rather than follow book challenge processes, some people have decided to just remove books—or worse, show up to school and library board meetings and call people "groomers" or engage in really horrible rhetoric in an effort to force the outcome they want.

So this surge in book bans is part of an overall movement that we're going through in the country. And libraries and schools are caught up in this because this is where people have the most power over their lives. It's a way more direct power than, say, what's going on in Washington or even in your state legislature. And social media has made it easy for people to find and share lists. It takes just one person to find the Moms for Liberty Facebook group, get their friends to join, and then show up.

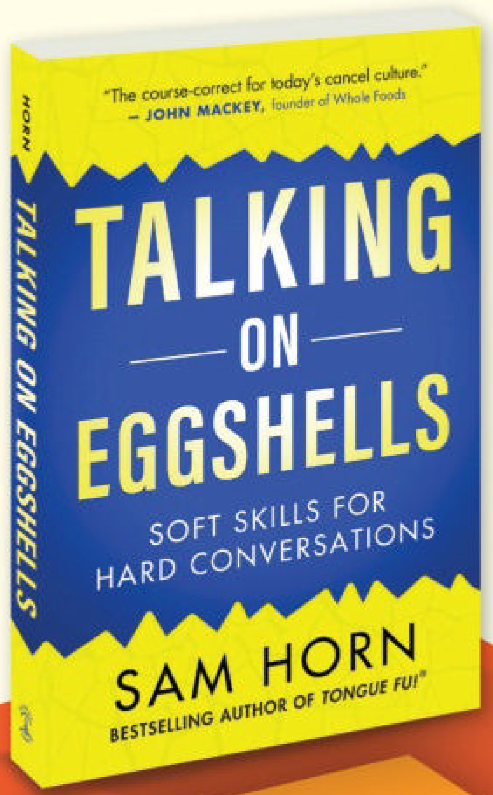
In recent years, challenges have become very focused on the LGBTQ and BIPOC communities. Has there always been such a pronounced political component to book challenges, or is that part of this new political moment?

Last year, 2022, was the 40th anniversary of *Island Trees School District* v. *Pico* [the first Supreme Court case to consider the First Amendment rights of users vs. the power of local school boards to remove library books from schools]. And I went back and looked at the list of books that they were considering, and they were all books about what we would call diverse topics now. So, yes, book challenges have always had a political valence to them.

But we are in a new moment. And I see a few things that have really led us to where we are now.

The first, of course, is the pandemic. One of the major things that happened with the pandemic, and I really want to emphasize this, is that school came home. It used to be you sent your kid off to school and they may or may not tell you what's going on. But during the pandemic, school was at the dining room table and I think a lot of parents discovered how much pedagogy has changed. And that has made some parents very nervous.

Another major thing that happened was George Floyd's murder and the protests that followed. Many of these protests happened in very small, very white communities across the country. And they were often led by kids, by teenagers, who showed up and said, "I am going to speak up about this horrible murder that happened in my country and why this is wrong." I think a lot of parents thought "Where is my kid hearing about this?" or "Why does my kid think it's okay to protest?"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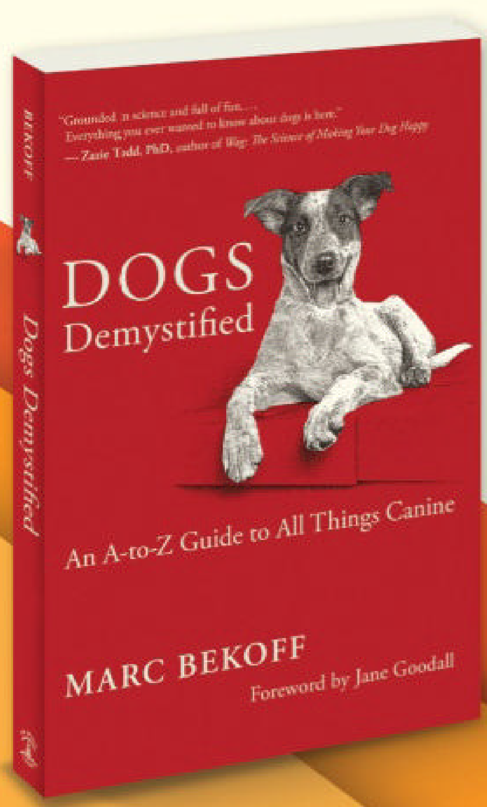

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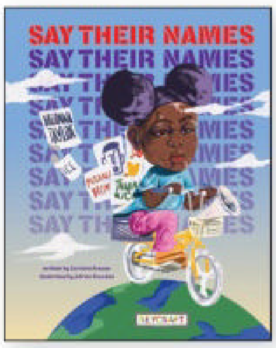

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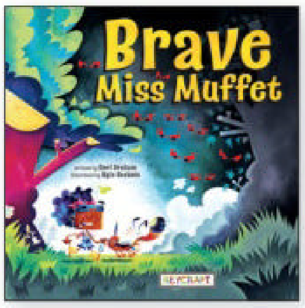

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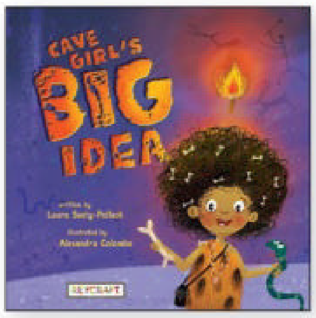

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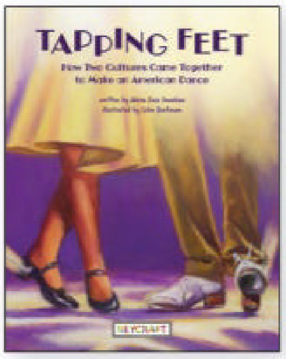

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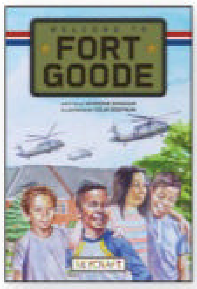

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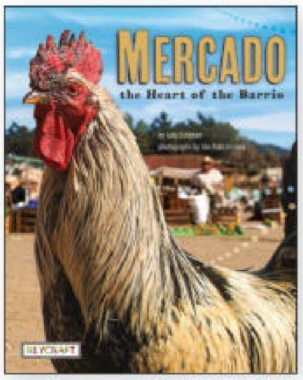

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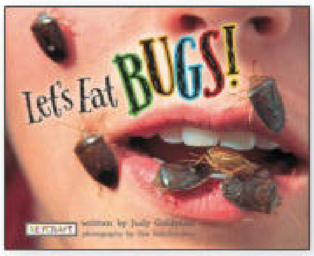

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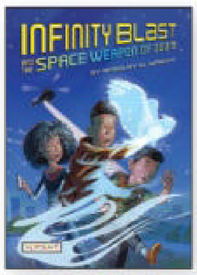

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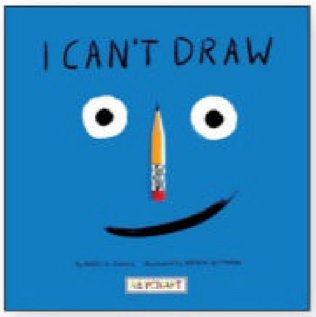

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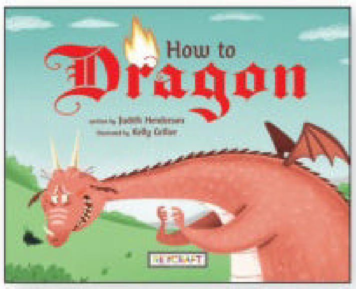

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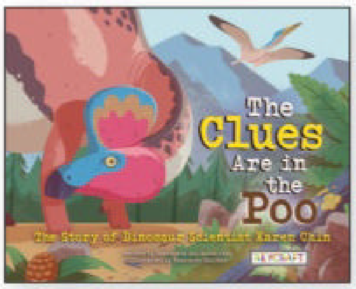

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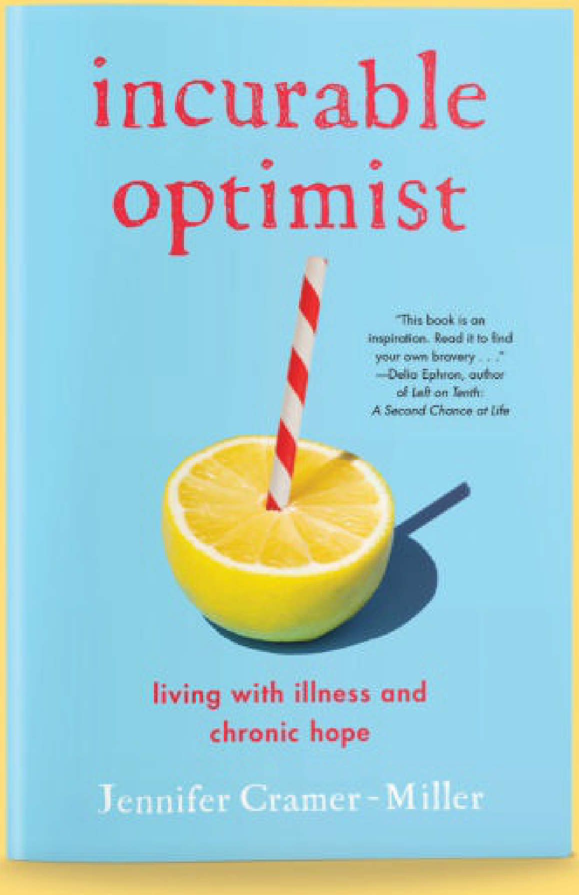
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> *Even if your community has not yet been touched by this wave of book bans, are you prepared for when it does happen?*

And I would also point to the demographic shift happening in the United States. What does it mean that we are moving to a majority minority country? How do we make sure that kids understand our history? How do we talk about our history of slavery and genocide and taking people's land? What does it mean to be an American? What does it mean to live in a democracy that does not always live up to its ideals? This has always been contentious in the United States, and many of the books being challenged today are being singled out because they do not center a white, heterosexual, cis male understanding of our world.

I have to point out the obvious here: people are going after books in libraries for being inappropriate when we all have these powerful computers in our pockets and access to the internet. This surge in book bans isn't really about books, is it?

One of my favorite things about my work is studying what I call the discourse of censorship—how do people argue for removing books? And what I've found is that, in so many of these arguments for banning books, the books themselves usually take up just a little time before the discussion moves on to larger issues, like what it means to be a human being, to have gender, or to reconcile with the Civil War.

Books are important. Books are symbols. Books represent truth. Books have outsize influence. But when you look at what book banners talk about, the book is almost always just a catalyst to talk about these other issues. We're figuring out what we are going to be as we get out of the pandemic, through this time of racial reckoning and into this nonwhite-majority world that we are going to be living in very, very soon. So it really is much more about power and control than it is about books.

I know this a huge, complicated question, but how do we effectively defend the freedom to read against this kind of politically organized threat?

There are many things that people can do. First, support the authors who have been targeted by these bans. Read a banned book. It's very, very important that their words get out there.

More than anything—organize, and show up. Even if your community has not yet been touched by this wave of book bans, are you prepared for when it does happen? Talk to the people who work in your libraries and schools so you know who to turn to. There's also the American Library Association, there's the National Coalition against Censorship, and there's your state library and education associations. Know who these people are and how to get in touch with them.

And bring your kids to the school or public library meeting. There's nothing more powerful than when kids and students speak up in public to support books and authors. It makes such a difference when you actually hear the kids say, "This is why this book matters to me."

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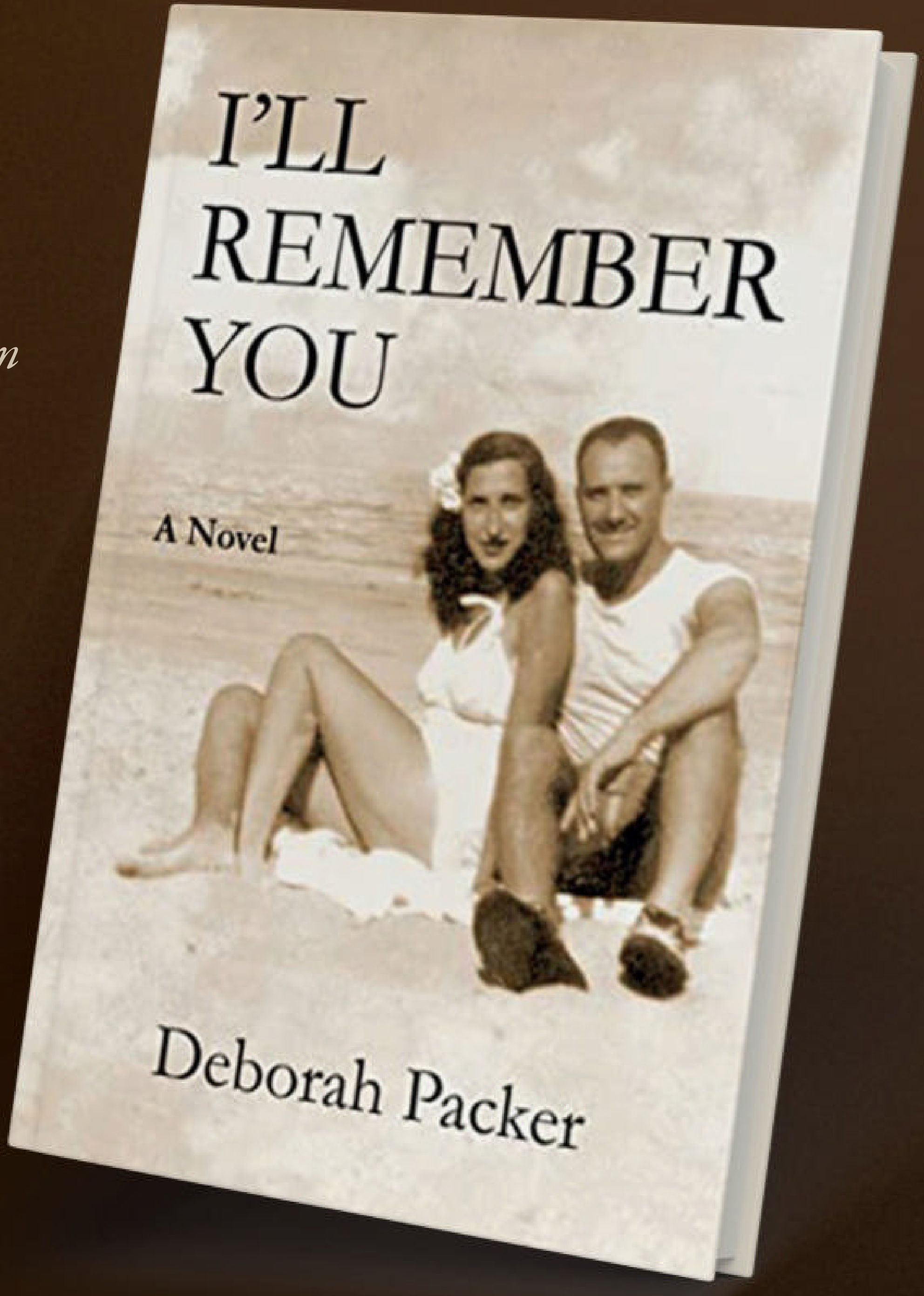

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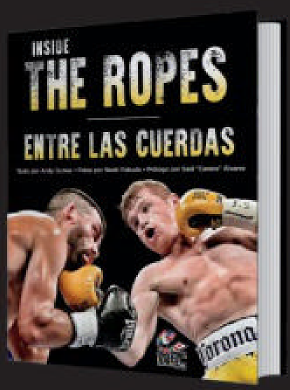

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150 YEARS... AND COUNTING

Librarians at ALA can help the Chicago Public Library celebrate a milestone anniversary

BY BETHANNE PATRICK

Christopher Brown

One of the highlights of the ALA Annual Conference this year will be the Chicago Public Library's 150th anniversary festivities, which will kick off with a citywide celebration on June 10 and continue throughout the rest of 2023. Attendees at ALA can tour the city's libraries. And Library commissioner Chris Brown says that along with 10 exhibits set up in historic libraries in neighborhoods across Chicago there will be a mural alongside the Kennedy Expressway commemorating CPL's contributions.

The CPL's impressive presence today in all 77 Chicago neighborhoods (for a total of 81 locations) goes back to the early vision of a chief librarian named Henry Legler, who in 1916 made a commitment to the city to offer every resident library access within walking distance. But perhaps the library's most impressive feat is its comeback from the 1871 Great Chicago Fire. "We really rose out of that fire and the ashes of our city," Brown says. "Civic and philanthropic commitments to restoring the library helped it find a way back. And Great Britain, then ruled by Queen Victoria, donated 8,000 volumes to help our collection rebound."

CPL's comeback from that devastating fire is one of the stories featured in the library's first podcast series, *Untold Stories*, which tells listeners about the past, and future, of the library. Among the other stories, the podcast covers how Chicago pioneered neighborhood library deliveries in 1874, with horse-drawn carts bringing books to places that didn't yet have their own library buildings, and how the Bronzeville library building once housed the offices of the *Chicago Sunday Bee*, one of the nation's most important African American newspapers.

Today, the CPL's YouMedia spaces for teens and the mixed-use co-locations it has created in partnership with the Chicago Housing Authority are popular places to meet, learn, and create. Brown notes that artists like Chance the Rapper and No Name came up through the open mic nights at the library, and even created their own early mixtapes there. And looking ahead, Brown stresses the library's desire to help "revitalize" neighborhoods suffering from decades of disinvestment and neglect.

"We want to embody for the rest of the country the idea that libraries are part of the solution," he says. "That we can be that 'anchor tenant' that connects people to valuable resources."

Brown says CPL is especially proud to welcome librarians from around the country to this year's ALA Annual conference given the challenges libraries are facing in terms of book bans. "Since 1936, when our first statement in support of intellectual freedom was released, the Chicago Public Library has stayed true to our values," he says. "And we are continuing to find ways to support our diverse readers and authors. As we're exiting the pandemic, to have this chance to be together and connect is a real high-water mark for our nation's libraries, where we can stand up for the inclusivity and discovery that have long made our spaces so important." ■

Bethanne Patrick is a writer and editor living in the Washington, D.C., area.

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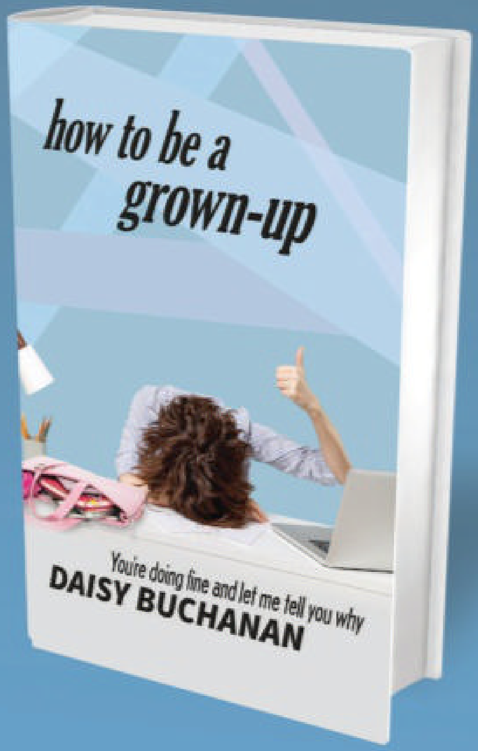
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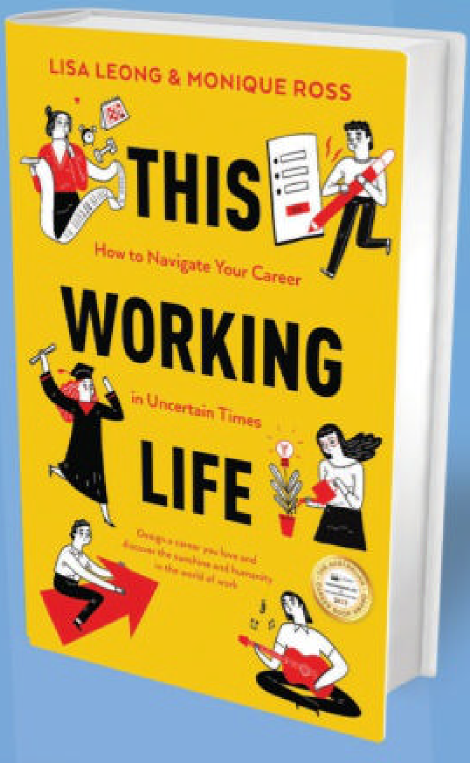
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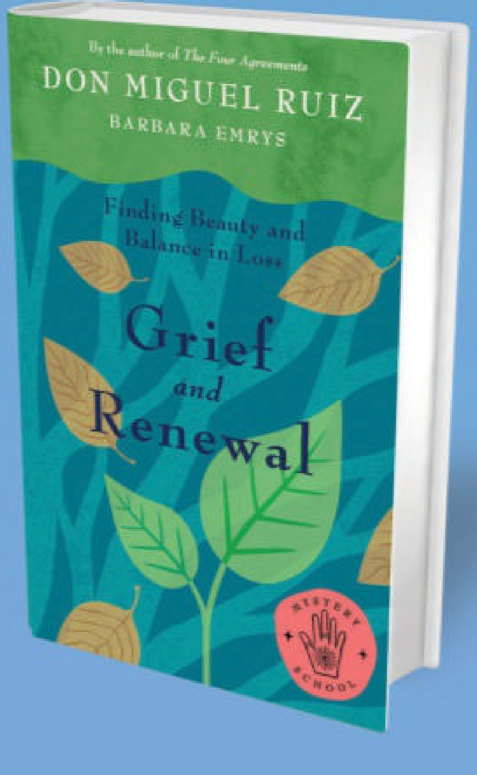
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At the Heart of It

Midwestern publishers find many advantages to being at the center of the country

By Claire Kirch

The publishers anchored in America's Heartland, particularly in Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin, include a vibrant mix of indies, literary nonprofits, children's publishers, religion and spirituality publishers, and academic presses. There's even a company in St. Paul, Minn., Elva Resa, that publishes books for both adults and children about almost every aspect of military life.

Heartland publishers may vary in size and scope, with some in large metro areas and others in small cities, but they all share one characteristic: without exception, they remain grounded in their local communities while doing business on a global scale. "It's all about networks," as Kregel Publications publisher Catherine DeVries puts it. "No matter where you are, you can find your people—you can find your community."

Sourcebooks editorial director Todd Stocke

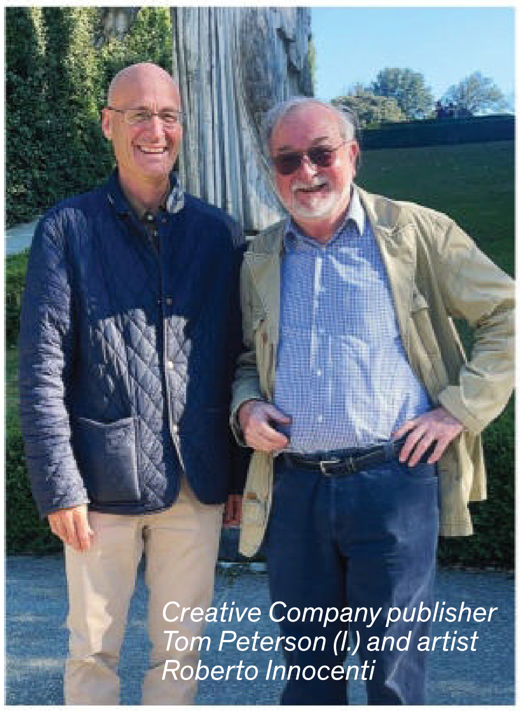
Describing Sourcebooks as "an outsider to the more traditional book publishing model," and ascribing that status to its location in a Chicago suburb, editorial director Todd Stocke says, "This has allowed us to forge our own path, and be both reader and data-centric. You may find that true of a lot of publishers in the Heartland—this freedom to operate and create outside the norm."

Noting Sourcebooks' roster of international authors, Stocke adds, "That's part of the job, too—bringing the ideas and cultures of this big, beautiful world back to our hometowns."

The times they are a-changing

While a number of publishers—such as Cynthia Sherry of Chicago Review Press, Adam Lerner of Lerner Publishing Group, and Kregel's DeVries—celebrate that the companies they lead remain family owned, change is in the air. Penguin Random House recently became a majority stakeholder in Sourcebooks, the company famously launched in 1987 in Dominique Raccah's spare bedroom, and in late 2021, Judy Galbraith, another industry trailblazer, sold Free Spirit, the children's publisher she founded in Minneapolis 40 years ago, to California-based Teacher Created Materials.

On the nonprofit literary publishing side, Fiona McCrae retired as publisher of Graywolf Press after 28 years, during which she transformed a struggling small press into what a *Chicago Tribune* columnist proclaimed to be "the greatest publisher in the world," its authors receiving such prestigious honors as the Nobel Prize, Booker and Booker International Prizes, Pulitzer Prize, National Book Award, and National Book Critics Circle Award.



Creative Company publisher Tom Peterson (l.) and artist Roberto Innocenti

Graywolf is not the only Heartland publisher to have attained great success with books that have become backlist stars. One notable example is Milkweed Editions, which has sold more than one million copies of its 2013 release *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants*.

Anna Erickson, v-p of sales for Mankato, Minn.–based Creative Company, says the publisher's Creative Editions picture book imprint was "probably better known internationally than in the U.S. for many years," due in part to Creative's relationship with famed Italian artist Roberto Innocenti. "For nearly 30 years, Creative Editions has been Roberto's exclusive publisher, and we've sold rights to his titles around the globe—including Italy."

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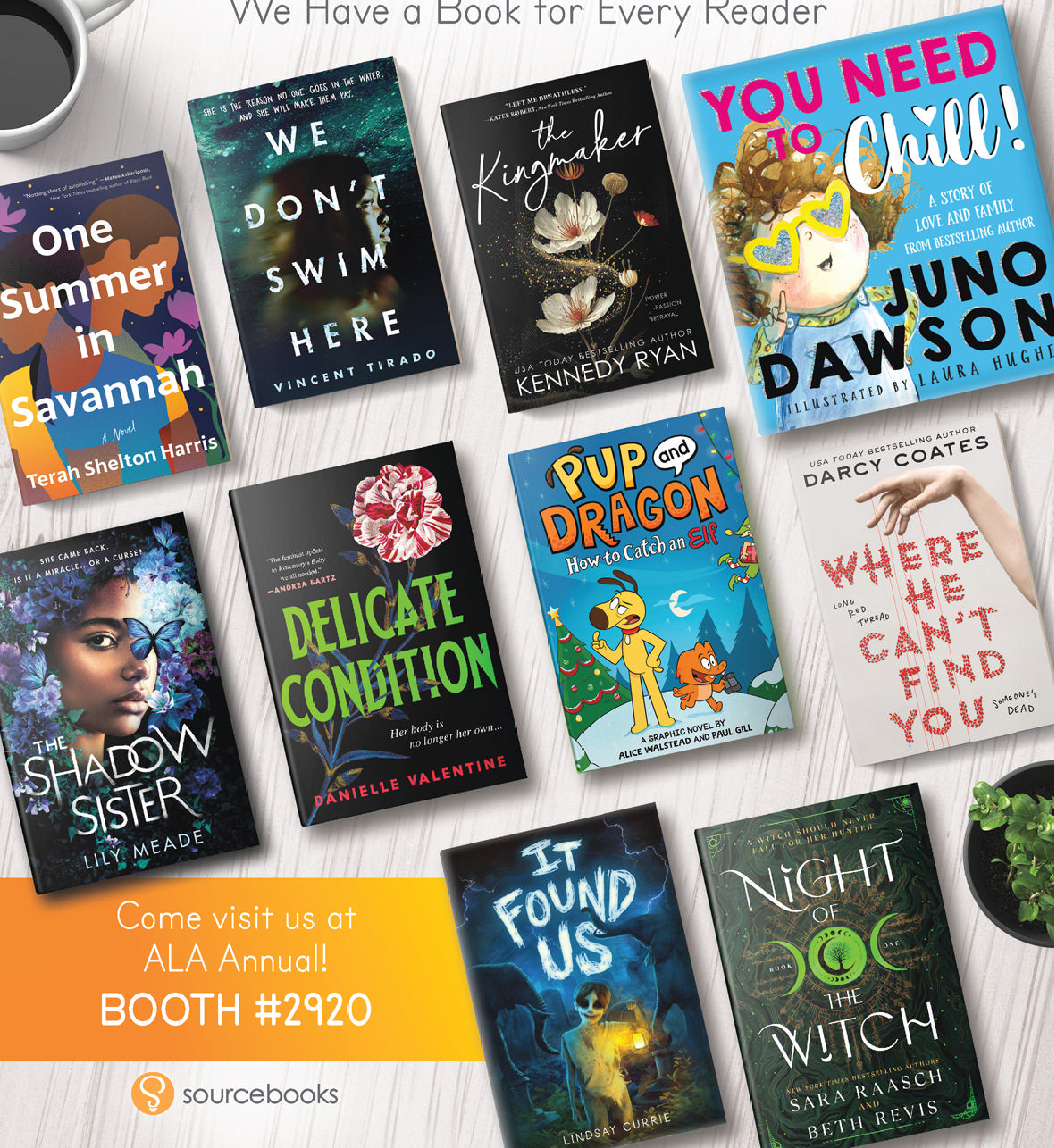
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sourcebooks

> “How do we expect kids to develop critical thinking skills if they are offered only one way to think? —Anna Erickson, v-p of sales, Creative Company

Among the publishers that helped Mary Taris (r.) of Strive Publishing and Strive Bookstore open a second Minneapolis location are (from l.): Jeannine Erickson and Tea Rozman of Green Card Voices; Artika Tyner of Planting People Growing Justice; and Karen Pavlicin of Elva Resa Publishing.

Diversity and inclusion

Of course, publishing in the Midwest does pose challenges endemic to the entire industry, including a need to diversify the workforce, and two Chicagoland publishers have taken action to do just that. Three years ago, Sourcebooks launched the BIPOC Editorial Program in an effort to make publishing careers more accessible to people of color from nontraditional backgrounds. The program, which is conducted remotely and pays a stipend, emphasizes the fundamentals of publishing while providing hands-on experience.

In July, Agate Publishing will roll out Agate Publishing Academy, a series of online courses designed to provide “an affordable and accessible option” for in-person publishing programs, says publisher Doug Seibold. “Pulling the curtain back is going to create more equity of opportunity for people. It should be important for our whole industry.”

A commitment to ramping up their output of books reflecting DEI themes was expressed by every Heartland publisher *PW* spoke with. While Lerner launched the Read Woke Books imprint to, as publicity director Lindsay Matvick says, “amplify the voices of people of the global majority and provide information about groups that have been disenfranchised,” Phoenix International launched its Sunbird Books imprint to “represent strong and diverse voices that reflect children’s realities,” according to publisher Susan Brooke.

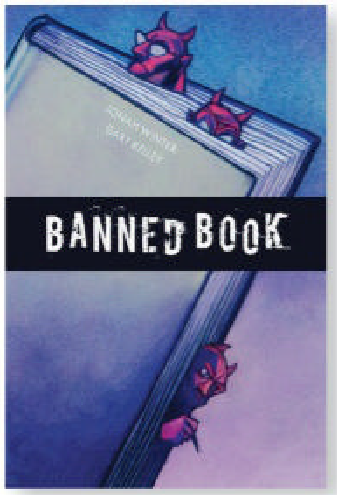
Confronting challenges

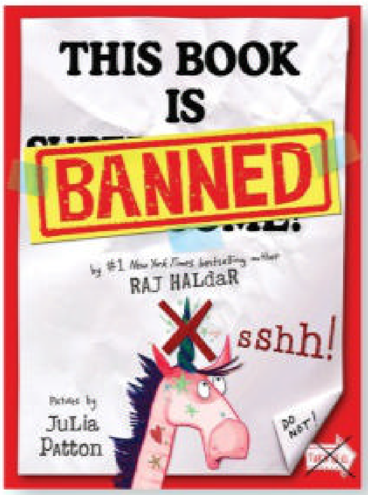
Even if they aren’t creating new imprints or specific lines to promote diversity and inclusion, Heartland publishers are publishing more and more books featuring LGBTQ and BIPOC characters—the kinds of books targeted by extremists and essential to library collections. A few publishers are even releasing books about book banning itself to educate children—and their parents—about censorship. Creative Editions recently published a picture book, *Banned Book*, and this fall Sourcebooks will release its own picture book on the subject, *This Book Is Banned*.

The spike in book bans is a major concern for all Heartland publishers. Even those that have not yet contended with their titles being challenged admit, as Two Dollar Radio publisher Eric Obenauf puts it, that “it does affect our approach in terms of the types of books we seek to publish.” That is not always in the ways that the extremists agitating for book bans would wish, however.

Noting that one of its releases, *Four Feet, Two Sandals*, has been challenged in Florida, publisher Anita Eerdmans of Eerdmans, which is renowned for its faith-based list for the Christian market, declares that while bans “continue to be distressing for us, it has only strengthened our resolve to publish books that reflect diversity of all kinds.” And Haymarket Books has been organizing free e-book giveaways and is spearheading a campaign to send donated books from its Chicago offices to schools and libraries under siege in Florida, Tennessee, and elsewhere.

Disclosing that Creative is so concerned about censorship that it has licensed the right to reprint a recent *Atlantic* magazine article, “The Librarians Are Not Okay,” on the cover of its fall 2023 catalog, Erickson points out, “The current political climate will affect everyone in the end. No library can hold physical copies of every book, but there is a vast difference between a collection curated by a trained professional and a collection stripped of anything even remotely controversial. How do we expect kids to develop critical thinking skills if they are offered only one way to think?” ■





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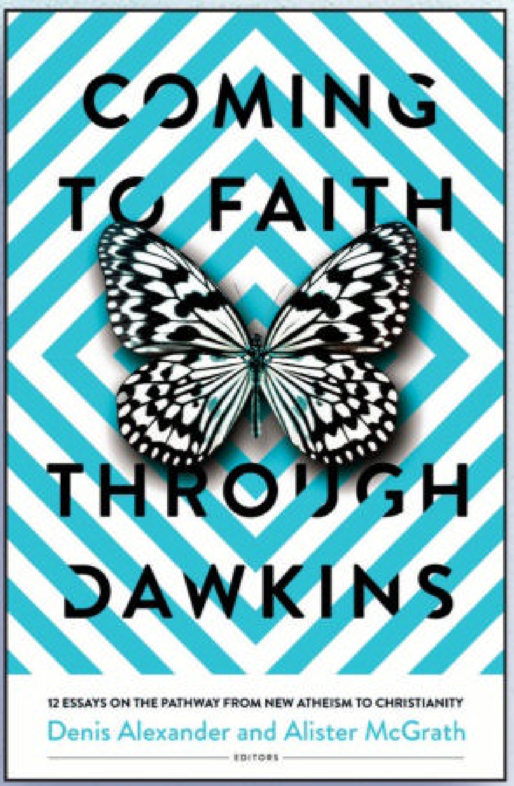
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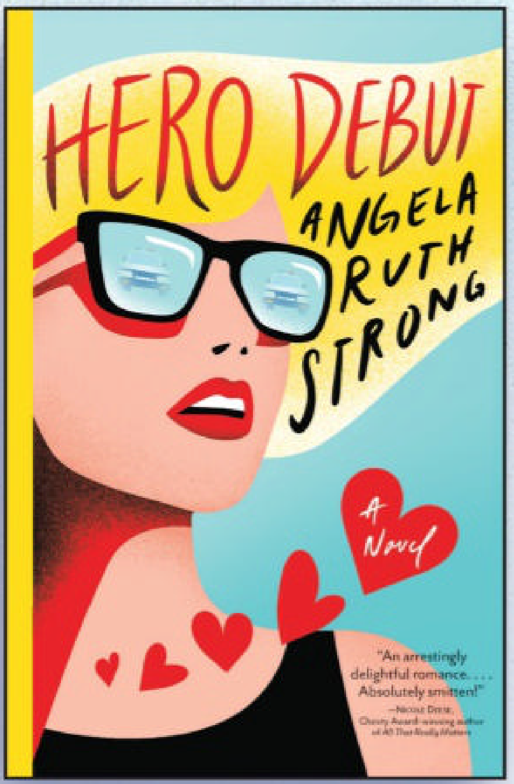
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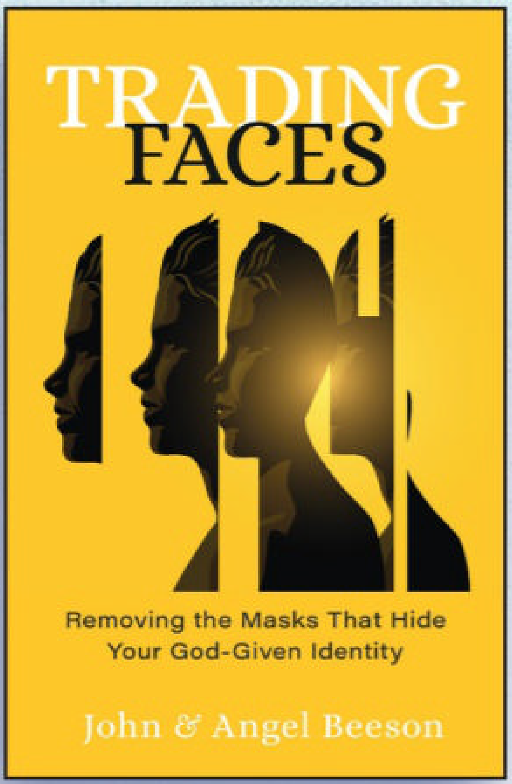
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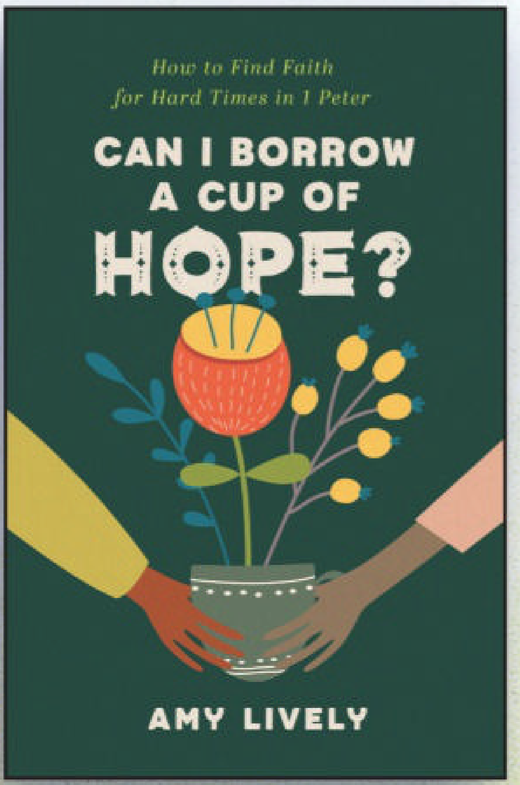
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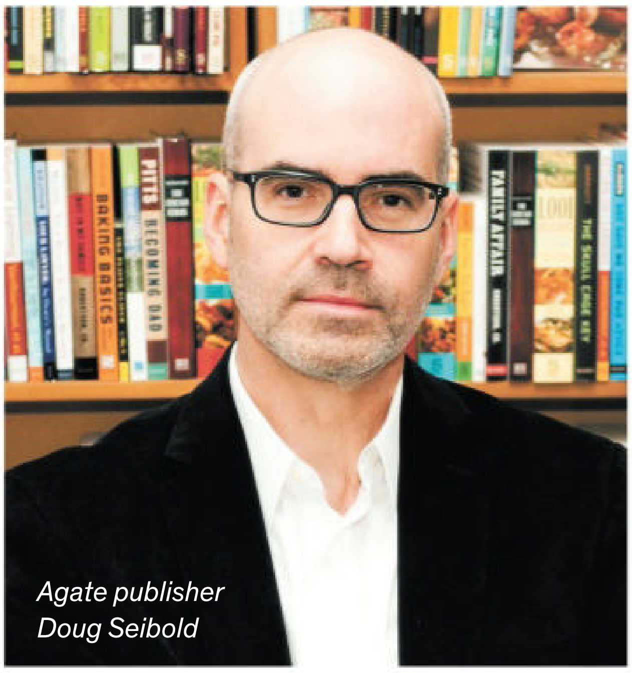
Something for Everyone

Midwestern trade publishers gear up for ALA

By Bethanne Patrick

Midwestern presses are proud of the publishing hubs they have created around the Great Lakes, in cities better known for their blue-collar industries. “Some people don’t think of Chicago as a publishing town,” says Doug Seibold, founder and publisher of Agate Publishing in Evanston, Ill. “But despite their thoughts, Chicago is a trade-publishing place with independent publishers like us who have become an integral part of this city’s cultural life.” Agate, which has grown to become one of Chicagoland’s largest indie publishers, was founded in Seibold’s basement in 2002 to publish books to fill a niche without him being “beholden to funders or donors or investors.”

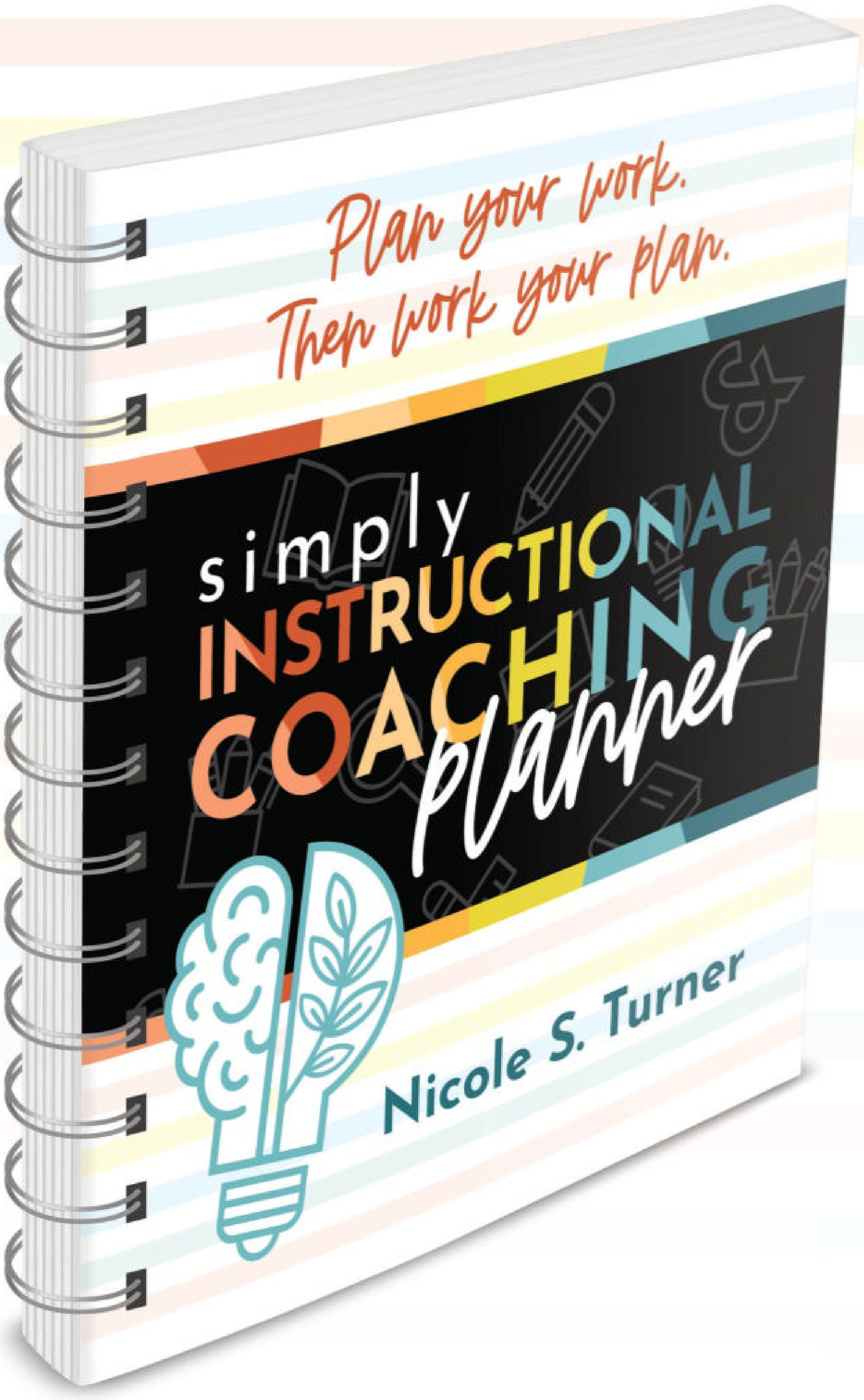


Agate publisher Doug Seibold

Agate was the first to publish acclaimed novelist Jesmyn Ward and food writer Iliana Regan, and Seibold expressed confidence that 2023 releases like *Under the Henfluence* by Tove Danovich and Regan’s *Fieldwork* will spark interest among librarians at the upcoming ALA Annual Conference, as well as its In Their Own Words series, now with a companion series for young readers that includes collections of quotes by Michelle Obama and Ruth Bader Ginsburg.

Launched at approximately the same time as Agate, Haymarket Books has published books by such authors as Rebecca Solnit, Arundhati Roy, and Howard Zinn examining systemic inequality and social justice from radical perspectives. Pointing out that sales surged during the pandemic and remain 54% above prepandemic levels, programming and development coordinator Dana Blanchard explains that the uprisings following George Floyd’s murder in 2020 were “transformative” for Haymarket: “Interest in our books matched the intensity of the political moment as people searched for ideas, analysis, history and politics related to systematic racism,” she says.

During ALA, Haymarket, which has been a leader in the fight against book bans and censorship, will host at its Chicago offices a gathering of “radical librarians,” publicity director Jim Plank says, “for a discussion of anti-censorship efforts and other ways for libraries and librarians to support liberation work.”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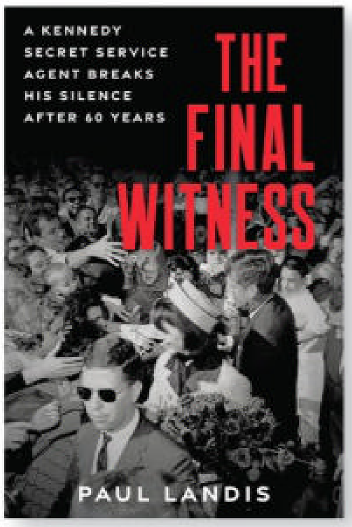
Celebrating its 50th anniversary this year, Chicago Review Press publishes 50 new books annually under nine imprints. Describing this fall's releases as "an exciting lineup," publisher Cynthia Sherry is confident that Paul Landis's *The Final Witness* will "generate a lot of excitement."

Another iconic publisher, Third World Press, is arguably the largest independent Black-owned publisher in the U.S. It launched in 1967 when Haki R. Madhubuti met with poet Carolyn Rodgers and activist Johari Amini in Madhubuti's Chicago basement; it has since grown into a multimillion-dollar company releasing works by such authors as Gwendolyn Brooks and Amiri Baraka.

The biggest publisher in Chicagoland is, of course, Sourcebooks. But it started out very small—in a bedroom in publisher Dominique Raccah's Naperville home. Now in its 36th year, Sourcebooks publishes about 540 books annually under 12 imprints, and among its adults imprints are Sourcebooks Casablanca for romance fiction; Sourcebooks Landmark, devoted to commercial fiction; and Bloom Books, dedicated to publishing entrepreneurial authors.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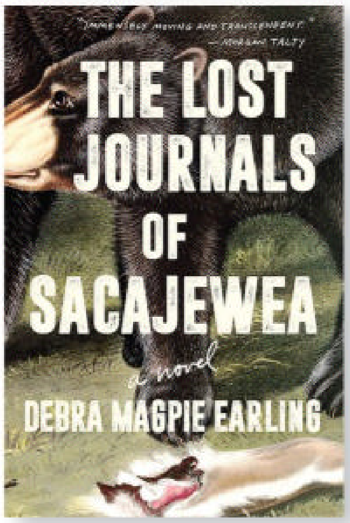
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Detroit's Aquarius Press publishes underrepresented voices, with its Willow Books imprint focusing on BIPOC authors. Visible Ink in nearby Canton focuses on the sciences, history, minority studies, and the paranormal.

Heading west, generous state funding supports Minnesota's cluster of literary nonprofit presses, including Coffee House Press, Graywolf Press, and Milkweed Editions. CHP has become renowned in recent years for its edgy offerings, and will feature at ALA such titles as poetry by Black queer femme Saretta Morgan. Graywolf will feature recent books from Tsitsi Dangarembga, Dana Gioia, and Max Porter, while Milkweed is spotlighting *The Lost Journals of Sacajewea* by Deborah Magpie Earling. Strive Publishing, a relative newcomer on the scene, publishes books of Black interest. Publisher Mary Taris also operates a bookstore and gift shop inside a collaborative retail space in downtown Minneapolis, the Sistah Co-op.

Minnesota is also known for publishers affiliated with two of the country's most prestigious medical facilities. The mission of Hazelden Publishing, a division of the Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation, is to help people overcome addictions, while Mayo Clinic Press publishes books on mental and physical health topics for both adults and children.

Belt Publishing, in suburban Cleveland, was founded in 2013 with the mission of publishing underrepresented perspectives from the Rust Belt region, while Two Dollar Radio in Columbus is, publisher Eric Obenauf says, "committed to championing diverse voices that speak to contemporary issue,"—and does so in true "Midwest nice" fashion.

When extremists prevented a local eatery from hosting a drag queen brunch, Two Dollar Radio partnered with Cover to Cover, a local children's bookstore, to set up a display of books by trans and nonbinary authors. A portion of the proceeds from sales were then donated to the Columbus Kaleidoscope Youth Center. And, Obenauf says, "We're shuffling our early 2024 list around a bit in order to publish some bold voices, such as a title that speaks directly to trans and nonbinary athletes in sport." ■

Bethanne Patrick is a writer and editor living in the Washington, D.C., area.

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Deep Roots

Midwestern children's publishers find inspiration in their communities

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Out of the Shadow World
COLLEEN CHAO
Illustrations by Benjamin Schipper
GIRLS SURVIVE
LENA AND THE BURNING OF GREENWOOD
A Tulsa Race Massacre Survival Story

By Claire Kirch

“In a way, Minnesota companies have become the center of independent children's publishing on a national level,” says Lerner Publishing Group CEO Adam Lerner. “We have not been ‘conglomeratized.’ The publishing scene is still run by families. Being a family-run business is part of our strength: we are dynamic and entrepreneurial. We all started from a school and library base. And there's also Mackin Educational Resources [a distributor to schools and libraries]. Owners Randy and Kitty Heise are the elder statesmen of the scene. They've done a lot to foster the industry here.”

LPG, founded by Lerner's father in 1959, is headquartered in Minneapolis, as are a number of smaller children's publishers,

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including Gryphon Press, Maren Green, Mighty Media, North Star Editions, and Oliver Press. ABDO and Capstone Publishing Group are both based in Mankato, with offices in suburban Minneapolis, while the Creative Company has operated out of Mankato for more than 90 years.

Minnesota publishers' nimbleness in responding to current events and cultural shifts with topical releases will be on full display at ALA, with such offerings from LPG as *Braiding Sweetgrass for Young Adults* and *Night and Dana*, a graphic novel that the publisher says is a "coming-of-age story for the climate-change era about making art and growing up when it feels like the world is on fire."

As for Creative Company, it will promote *Banned Book*, which uses redacted text to explore how and why books are targeted. It will also spotlight *Simply Skye*, about a nonbinary child who can't identify as either male or female. "It has nothing to do with politics and everything to do with one child's worry about disappointing their family," says Anna Erickson, v-p, sales.

Capstone is spotlighting *Lena and the Burning of Greenwood: A Tulsa Race Massacre Story*. "The author introduced me to this quote from a Tulsa Race Massacre survivor," says v-p of publishing Beth Brezenoff. "'Maybe if we talk about it enough, it'll never be again.' I'm really proud to publish this book; it is a story worth reading—even when it's hard to do so."

Sweet home Chicagoland

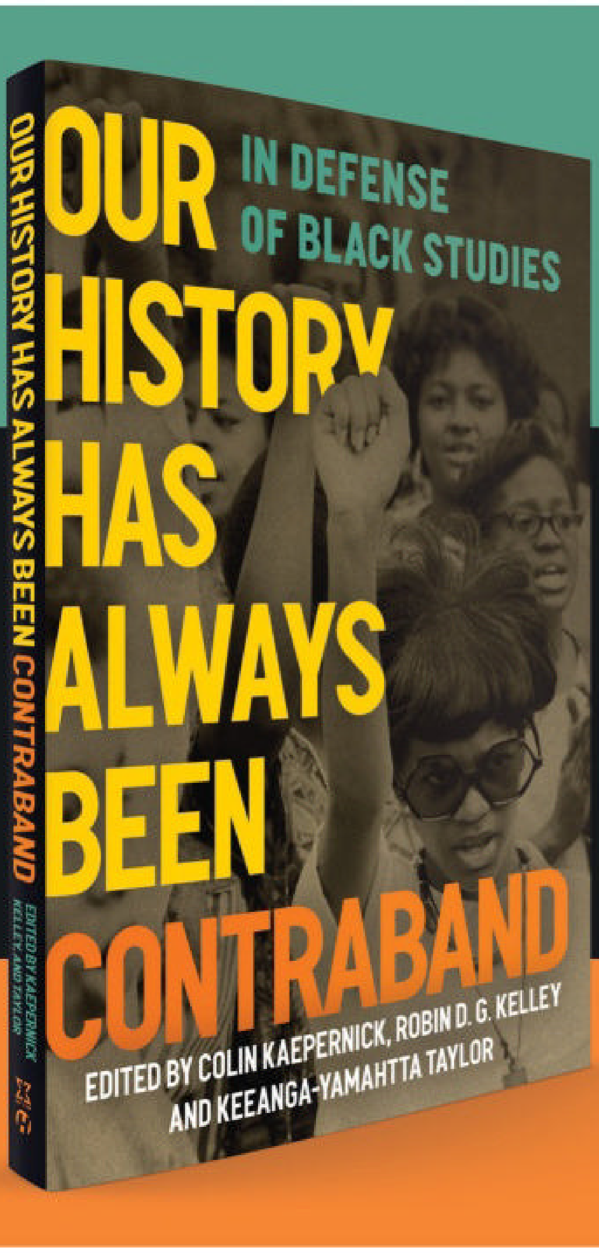
Chicagoland's children's publishers are every bit as connected to their communities and responsive to the zeitgeist as their Minnesota counterparts.

"Our Midwest roots are deeply ingrained in who we are and the company we've built," says Sourcebooks editorial director Todd Stocke. "We have always been keenly aware that our readership is our neighbors, and our neighbors are regular folks."

At ALA, Sourcebooks will promote *This Book Is Banned*, "a hilarious—and thoughtful—look," senior marketing director Heather Moore says, "at what happens when ideas are outlawed instead of shared." Moore is also excited about *You Need to Chill!*, a picture book with a protagonist whose brother Bill has become her sister Lily.

Black Swans

Albert Whitman & Co. sales and marketing director Tom MacDonald says he'll focus on the company's Abby in Orbit series, which he calls a "fabulous chapter book series about a


OUR HISTORY HAS ALWAYS BEEN CONTRABAND
IN DEFENSE OF BLACK STUDIES
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fun-loving third grader's adventures in space travel," at ALA, as well as books that emphasize community, including *Jack the Library Cat*.

Phoenix International is spotlighting its Kids Ask About nonfiction series, which Chris Fey, publisher of PI's Sequoia Kids Media school and library imprint, describes as "perfect for summer reading." PI will also have on hand *Black Swans*, a picture book containing stories about six pioneering Black ballet dancers. *Black Swans* is, per PI v-p, publisher Susan Brooke, an example of a commitment to publishing books that explore "diversity within diversity," with releases about BIPOC notables including civil rights activists and astronauts, as well as ballet dancers.

Brown Sugar Baby
Christmas Joy
Brown Sugar Baby
Sweetest Love
cover not final

Cottage Door is also prioritizing diversity with its Brown Sugar Baby series of board books. It will be promoting two 2023 releases at ALA: *Brown Sugar Baby Christmas Joy* and *Brown Sugar Baby Sweetest Love*.

> "Our Midwest roots are deeply ingrained in who we are.
> —Todd Stocke, editorial director, Sourcebooks

East of Lake Michigan, in the Detroit metro, Cardinal Rule Press will be a first-time ALA exhibitor, and publisher Maria Dismondy is eager to introduce librarians to her company and its list. One release that she anticipates will resonate is *Hide and Shh!*, which features a main character with Down syndrome. Dismondy notes, however, that this is not the point of the story. "We had plenty of feedback on the development of this character, Dinah, from parents and teachers in the DS community, and we think Dinah is an amazing representation," she says. ■

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A Higher Purpose

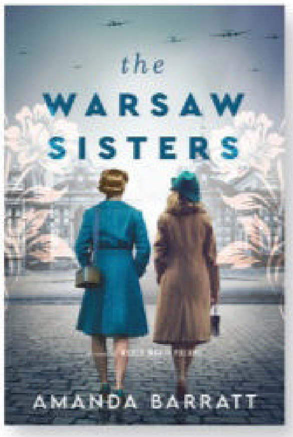
Religious presses in the Midwest offer hope through books

By Claire Kirch

Even though Grand Rapids, Mich., has a population of only about 200,000, the western Michigan city and surrounding area is a major hub of religion publishing and is home to Baker Publishing Group, Eerdmans Publishing, Kregel Publications, and Zondervan.

"A lot of the publishers in the Midwest came out of the same faith traditions, and also knew each other," says Andrea Doering, editorial director of Revell, BPG's fiction imprint. "They started publishing books in their hometowns around the same time, during the Great Depression. They had a ready and willing market there, across the country, and across the globe."

Kregel publisher Catherine DeVries concurs, noting that three of the four companies are still family owned (Zondervan is now part of HarperCollins Christian Publishing). Being a family-owned enterprise in Michigan, DeVries says, "gives us the freedom to publish what we feel is important and what people need. We believe in the books we publish; they're not just numbers on a list."

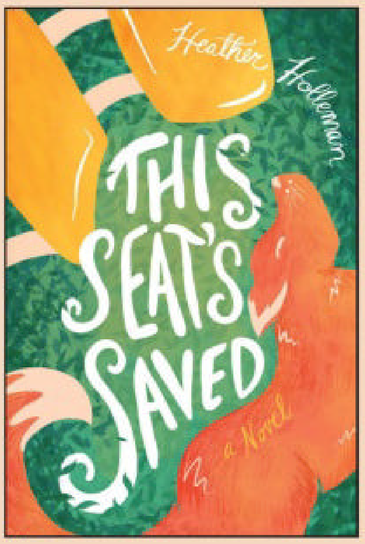


Both Doering and DeVries point out that, while people everywhere are transitioning to postpandemic life, readers are still, as DeVries put it, "looking for hope, a deeper purpose" than they sought prior to 2020. Both are especially excited about their faith-based fiction lists, each citing a novel set in WWII Poland—both written, coincidentally, by Andrea Barratt. This fall, Revell is releasing *The Warsaw Sisters*, while back in January Kregel released *Within These Walls of Sorrow*.

Explaining that the Black Lives Matter movement has driven Kregel to build a more diverse list, DeVries is also excited about nonfiction, such as *Colorful Connections*, a book about race coauthored by a Black woman and a white woman. "Issue-based books are very important," DeVries says. "We need more voices from a variety of perspectives."

Chicago publishers keep the faith

Most of the other religion publishers in the Heartland are located in major metro areas and affiliated with larger organizations. Four of these houses are clustered in Chicago: InterVarsity Press, affiliated



ISBN: 978-0-8024-2886-8
Publish Date: June 2023

Class schedules, locker combinations, and the play for popularity — Middle School is a new world with new rules. Smart, awkward, and totally likeable Elita Brown begins to find meaning and purpose in some unexpected places, including the woods where she is "most herself."

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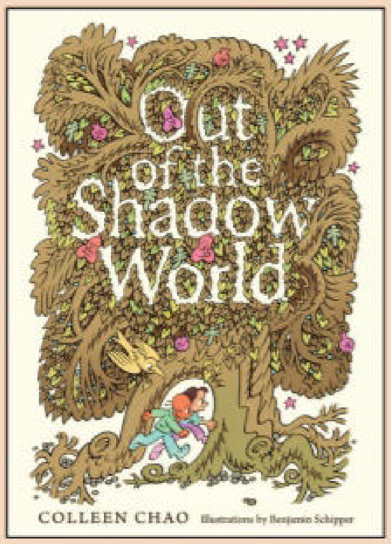

ISBN: 978-0-8024-3092-2
Publish Date: May 2023

In *Out of the Shadow World*, Colleen Chao masterfully weaves a tale of suffering and joy. Children will be captivated. Readers develop empathy and a theology of suffering that equips them to both face difficult circumstances and love others who are experiencing hardship.

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with InterVarsity Christian Fellowship; Loyola Press, the publishing arm of the Roman Catholic Jesuit ministries; Moody Publishing, part of the Moody Bible Institute; and Tyndale, the publishing division of Tyndale House Ministries.

All four will spotlight their offerings for children at the upcoming ALA Annual Conference. IVP will introduce its new IVP Kids line, and Loyola is announcing the launch of its 4U2B Books & Media imprint, which publisher Joellyn Cicciarelli says will focus on "secular books for children and adults that deliver connected, inclusive, and inspirational topics and stories." Tyndale will be giving away *A Twisty Turny Journey*, the 11th volume in its Dead Sea Squirrels middle grade series.

Moody publisher Randall Payleitner says the press is "making new strides to reach middle grade readers, with both nonfiction and fiction, to help them better navigate the complex world in which they live." *Out of the Shadow World* and *This Seat Is Saved* are two new "poignant fiction" releases that he thinks "every library should carry," Payleitner says, as both "make real-world sense out of the difficulties faced by today's kids."

While the Twin Cities are renowned for being hubs of literary and children's publishing, Minneapolis is also home to 1517 Media, the publishing arm of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. 1517 Media publishes for the trade under two imprints: Broadleaf Books for adults and Beaming Books for children. Explaining that "our lists expand beyond progressive Christian interest to reach and speak to a general readership interested in such topics as social justice, spirituality, and personal wellness," senior director of marketing and sales Alison Vandenberg is buzzing about *The Bodies Keep Coming: Dispatches from a Black Trauma Surgeon on Racism, Violence, and How We Heal*, due out in September.

The Pilgrim Press moved to Cleveland in 1990, and publisher Rachel Hackenberg declares that the publishing arm of the United Church of Christ will never leave the Midwest. "Pilgrim has built relationships with other small presses," including those in Cleveland, Hackenberg says, and is a member of "an association of Protestant-owned publishing houses." She "adores" Pilgrim's children's book series Slug and Snail, "because it engages children in fundamental concepts of belonging and global citizenship through the adventures of a pair of crawling besties."

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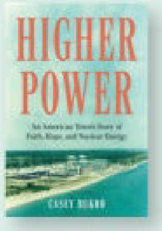

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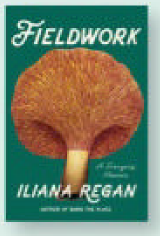

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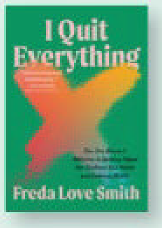

I Quit Everything
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Beyond the Ivy Tower

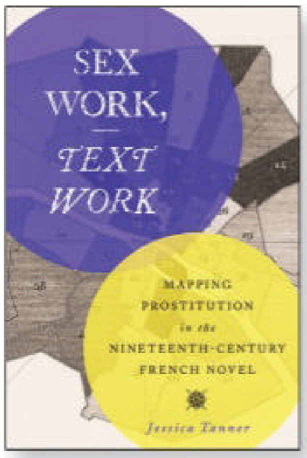
Midwestern scholarly presses increasingly target general readers with their offerings

By Bethanne Patrick

Scholarly publishers in the Midwest, like their counterparts in other regions, have expanded their lists beyond the academic market, and are acquiring books that appeal to general readers, including biography, literary fiction, history, and poetry, as well as regional interest titles. Such "crossover" titles vary not just from state to state, but from publisher to publisher. Northwestern University Press still releases strong cultural criticism titles, like *Sex Work, Text Work: Mapping Prostitution in the Nineteenth-Century French Novel*, but it also publishes literary fiction, such as *As If She Had a Say*.

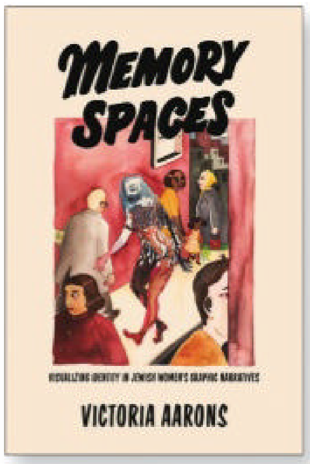
At Southern Illinois University in Carbondale, the list hews more closely to traditional academic guidelines, with history, botany and criminology often tied to regional interests, such as the recently released *Mary Lincoln Demystified*. The University of Illinois Press also tends toward the academic, with strong offerings in Black studies, labor history, and musicology, such as *Workers of All Colors Unite* and *A House for the Struggle*.

At Wayne State University Press in Detroit, which calls itself "a distinctive urban publisher," the list mixes current scholarship—such as *Memory Spaces* about Jewish women's graphic narratives—with poetry and fiction, including *Enough to Lose* and the poetry collection *The Second Stop Is Jupiter*. "We hold the range and depth of our list as a point of pride," says director Stephanie Williams. "Our Made in Michigan series, for example, includes poetry, creative nonfiction, and fiction works across a range of forms, modes, and styles. Most exciting to me as a Stephanie and



as a Black woman is the opportunity to work with Stephanies Evans, Shonekan, and Adams on the timely *Dear Department Chair: Letters from Black Women Leaders to the Next Generation*."

In East Lansing, Michigan State University Press publishes many books about the environment and the natural world, such as *Great Women of Mackinac, 1800–1950* and the novel *Wiijiwaagangag: More Than Brothers*. At the University of Michigan Press in Ann Arbor, titles lean toward narrow, serious topics for many different fields of study, from the classics to modern languages to video game theory, including 2023's *Toward a Gameic World* by Ben Whaley and *Writing on the Soil*.



The Minnesota Historical Society Press, headquartered in St. Paul, showcases Minnesota and the Upper Midwest with cookbooks, memoirs, and history, many of them centered on regional concerns, like *Minescapes* and *Wild Things: A Trans-Glam-Punk-Rock Love Story*. The University of Minnesota Press has *The Sioux Chef's Indigenous Kitchen* by Sean Sherman, who was featured in *Time* magazine's "100 Most Influential People of 2023." Other titles of strong ALA interest include *Earth Ice Blood Bone* and *The Last Supper Club*.

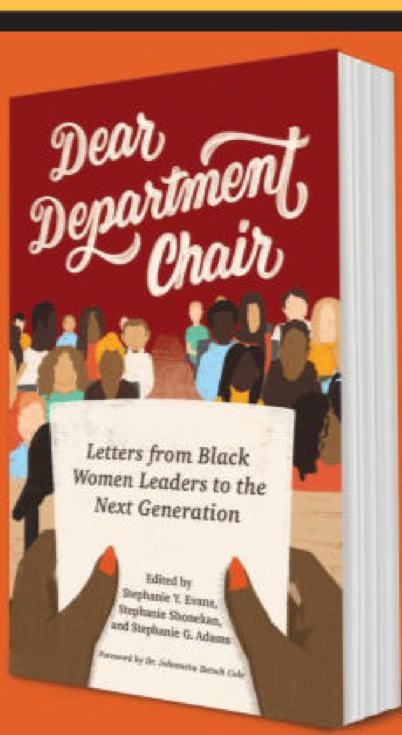
Kent State University Press in Kent, Ohio, offers a mix of highly specialized academic titles in fields such as African American studies and social science, including *Fraternal Light: Painting While Black* and *Dressing à la Turque*. However, those fields have expanded to include a book on the barrier-breaking comic strip *Funky Winkerbean*, as well as one on true crime that involves murder with a potato masher.

With a mission to focus on its region's "history, diversity, culture, and environment," Ohio State University Press in Columbus releases many essay collections and works of fiction with ties to the Housatonic area, especially as part of its Trillium imprint. A few of its standout 2023 titles are *Growing Up Graphic*, *Asian American Players* and *Safe in a Midwife's Hands*.

Ohio University Press in Athens was established in 1947 and is known for a serious list with strengths in books relating to the Midwest, Appalachia, Southeast Asia and Africa. Swallow Press, acquired in 2008 by Ohio University Press, reprints many classics besides offering new releases. *Afrofuturisms* and *Collective Chaos* are among the press's latest releases.

In Madison, the University of Wisconsin Press has myriad series and journals that support scholars in areas that include African studies, Jewish studies, and books about the Upper Midwest. Its spring 2023 offerings include *Radium Girl* poetry collection as well as *Charlottengrad: Russian Culture in Weimar Berlin*. Less than a mile away are the offices of the Wisconsin Historical Society Press, which has been publishing since 1855. It continues to release relevant works like *The Flavor of Wisconsin* and *A History in Indigenous Voices*, the latter a title that should appeal to librarians seeking to further diversify their collections. ■

Wayne State University Press



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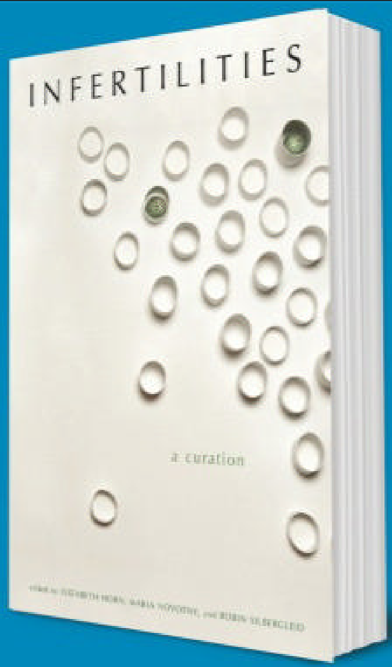

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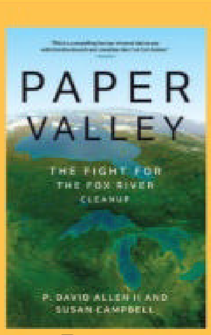

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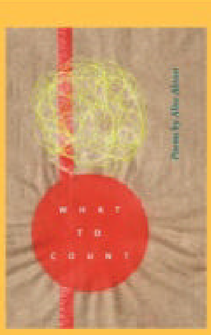

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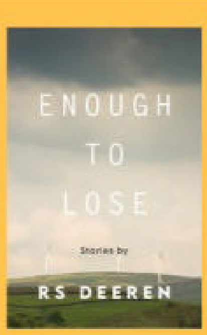

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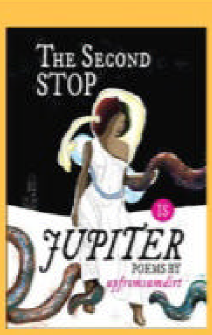

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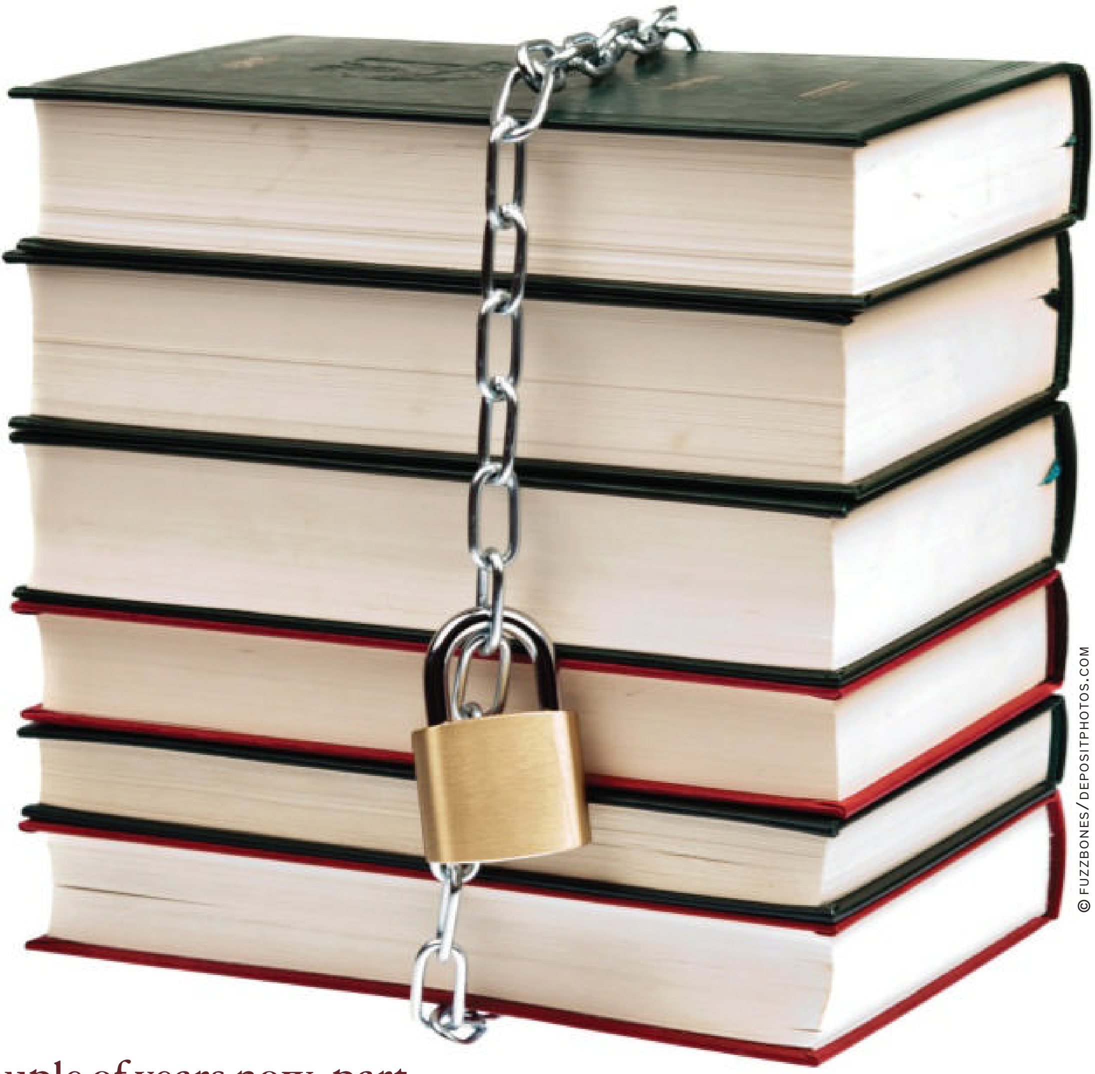
In the Field

SCHOOL LIBRARIANS SHARE THEIR EXPERIENCES AND BEST PRACTICES IN THE FACE OF CENSORSHIP ATTACKS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By Shannon Maughan

Book challenges and bans leveled on children's and YA materials in school and public libraries have been in the headlines for a couple of years now, part of a news cycle fueled by the heat of the politically motivated culture war gripping the country. As has been widely reported, the American Library Association's Office for Intellectual Freedom recorded its highest-ever number of demands to censor library materials in 2022, and 58% of those challenges "targeted books and materials in school libraries, classroom libraries, or school curricula." In other recent tracking data, PEN America's latest Index of School Book Bans found that in the first half of the 2022–2023 school year, there were "1,477 instances of books banned affecting 874 unique titles," which is up 28% over the prior six months. These bans occurred in 37 states, with Texas, Florida, Missouri, Utah, and South Carolina topping the list.

We spoke with some school librarians about the effects of book banning on their work, and how they are finding and offering support during this stressful and troubling time in their profession. Given this exceptionally tense climate, a number of school librarians declined to speak on the record for this story.

"It is exhausting," says Kim Fields, school library media specialist at Hillsborough County Public Schools in Tampa, Fla. "Each day our governor comes up with new ideas, new demands, new terrible backwards steps. Essentially, this is an attempt to indoctrinate all people who do not conform to conservative Christian beliefs."

Fields explains that the biggest push behind the spate of Florida legislation designed to censor curricula and ban books is coming from the group Moms for Liberty, which she notes was founded in her state's Brevard County in 2021. The conservative nonprofit's purpose is to "fight for the survival of America by unifying, educating, and empowering parents," according to its website. Most recently, the group has put its mission into action by organizing its nationwide network of chapters to advocate—often via school boards—against mentions of race, LGBTQ rights, discrimination, gender and sexuality, and other related topics in school curricula.

In Hillsborough, Fields says, "we have one MFL member on our board and she is very vocal. We recently had our first official challenge of a book [*This Book Is Gay*], and she swayed the school board vote [resulting in a ban] at the very last second. The last board meeting I listened to—they occur during school hours, so while we cannot attend, we

Kim Fields, *school library media specialist at Hillsborough County Public Schools.*

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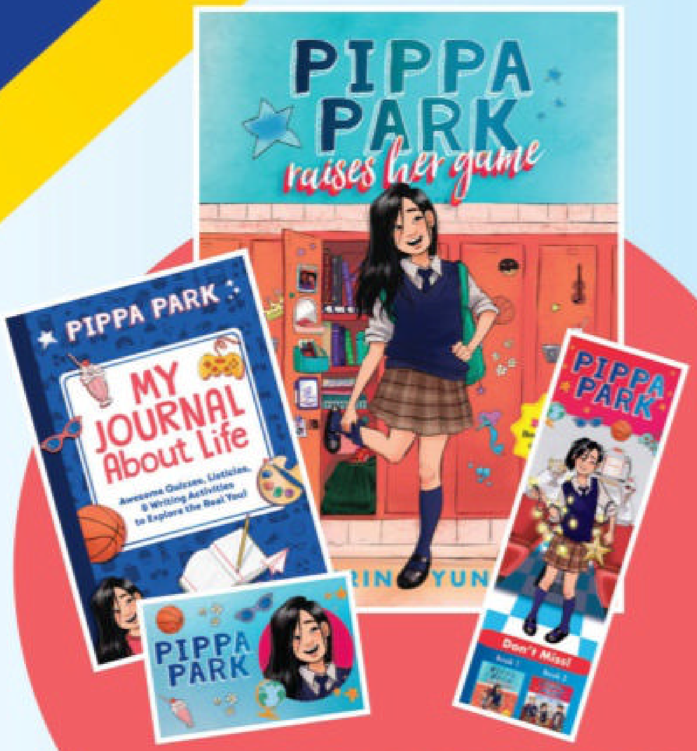
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can listen to a livestream or recordings to stay up to date—had 58 speakers lined up. It was horrible, but like a train wreck you cannot turn away from."

Shadows over the Sunshine State

Looming particularly large for Fields and fellow Florida librarians is the recent passage of Florida House Bill 1069, which serves as an expansion of the state's "don't say gay" law and goes into effect July 1. The new law mandates requirements for instruction and materials relating to human sexuality and reproductive health, and it will also dictate the use of pronouns and terminology related to sexual orientation or gender identity deemed acceptable in schools. Equally distressing to many librarians, the law also defines "classroom libraries" and delineates new standards for book challenges.

"The language of this bill is concerning for those who want to inspire readers and make sure students have access to appropriate, respected books about subjects of their own interest," says Suzy Tkacik, media specialist at Pride Elementary in Tampa. "Among other things, it requires that every book in every classroom be cataloged, made searchable to the public, and vetted and approved by a licensed school media specialist. With more than 60 classrooms in my school, this will require hundreds of hours collectively to accomplish."

Fields agrees that the scope of work created by the fast-approaching legislative shifts is burdensome. "It makes the library media specialist responsible for maintaining and approving *all* classroom books beyond those in the approved curriculum," Fields says. This includes any donated books or Little Free Libraries on school property.

Tkacik notes that some of the teachers in her school fear losing their job or their teaching license over books in their classroom libraries. "I have heard from more than a few teachers that they plan to just remove their classroom libraries rather than face the scrutiny that Florida HB 1069 threatens," she says. "This is absolutely heartbreaking to hear."

She explains that access to both the school and the classroom library is vital for students. "Classroom libraries serve a different function than a school library. Free choice is perhaps the most important factor in inspiring independent reading, so any time we limit access to appropriate choices, we limit opportunities for kids to learn to love to read."

Tkacik adds that when kids "can't find themselves, their interests, or what makes them curious" in books, they can easily search for that material somewhere else, with potentially harmful results. "Books in school libraries and classrooms have been thoughtfully curated by librarians and teachers for their particular audience."

Under the new law, Fields says, the process for challenging books will change. "Books that are challenged in any way by any person must immediately be removed or 'quarantined.' Any protest of any book will make this happen."

Previously, challenged books remained in the library until the challenge went through all the proper channels and a decision was made. Like Tkacik, Fields notes that, faced with this kind of censorship, "many teachers are choosing to box up and take home all of their available books. The wider scope of this means less access to books for kids all around. It will be illegal to carry most of what we have now, especially at the middle and high school levels."

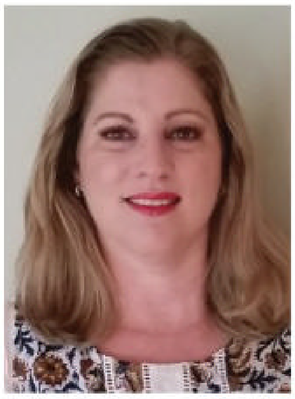
Something's got to give

Censorship efforts such as legislating what is taught in schools and which materials are permitted to be there have a chilling ripple effect that has already impacted what the day-to-day work of a school librarian or media specialist looks like.

"The heavy slate of new legislation in my state has added another layer of work and stress to an already overwhelming list of duties," Tkacik says, noting that her responsibilities include technology maintenance and repair, instructional technology, and school communications, in addition to managing a library of roughly 10,000 volumes and teaching classes every day. "I think school media specialists already juggle about three full-time jobs in our one job—as do most teachers and school administrators. The new legislation means more state training, more time substantiating our book choices by requiring external reviews for each item, and now ongoing time needed to review and approve every book in every classroom library."

The strain is taking a toll. "Our mood now is dark," Fields says. "We are angry. We are frustrated. We are insulted; our degree, required by the state, means less than one parent's right to choose. They will now mandate what is selected based on their biased personal beliefs, and not our professional degrees."

Suzy Tkacik, *media specialist at Pride Elementary.*



Bonnie Simcock

Large Print for Readers Young and Old

Thorndike Press is expanding its library of large-print titles with an eye to helping young readers develop and succeed

While large-print books are typically associated with older readers or people with visual disabilities, Thorndike Press manager of acquisitions Bonnie Simcock says the appeal of large-print books is much broader than many people realize. "It's finding a younger audience, and it is proven to support English-language learners, below-grade-level readers, and anyone whose eyes need a break from digital screens," she says.

Thorndike Press publishes a vast library of large-print titles for all ages across multiple genres. In addition to the 1,100 adult large-print titles Thorndike publishes annually, it currently has more than 1,000 juvenile and YA large-print books—a list that is steadily growing to meet the needs of developing readers.

Currently, authors on the children's list include Kwame Alexander, Leigh Bardugo, Jenny Han, Jason Reynolds, and Angie Thomas. Popular series for kids include Diary of a Wimpy Kid, Harry Potter, Dork Diaries, and Spy School. Thorndike acquisitions editors routinely seek out and evaluate book submissions such as these from major publishers while also monitoring reviews, awards, bestseller lists, and book club picks. Thorndike's youth large-print titles feature original cover art, are unabridged, and aren't labeled as large print on the cover or spine. As a result, Thorndike children's and YA books are virtually indistinguishable from standard-print editions—which is crucial for readers who might be self-conscious about their skill levels.

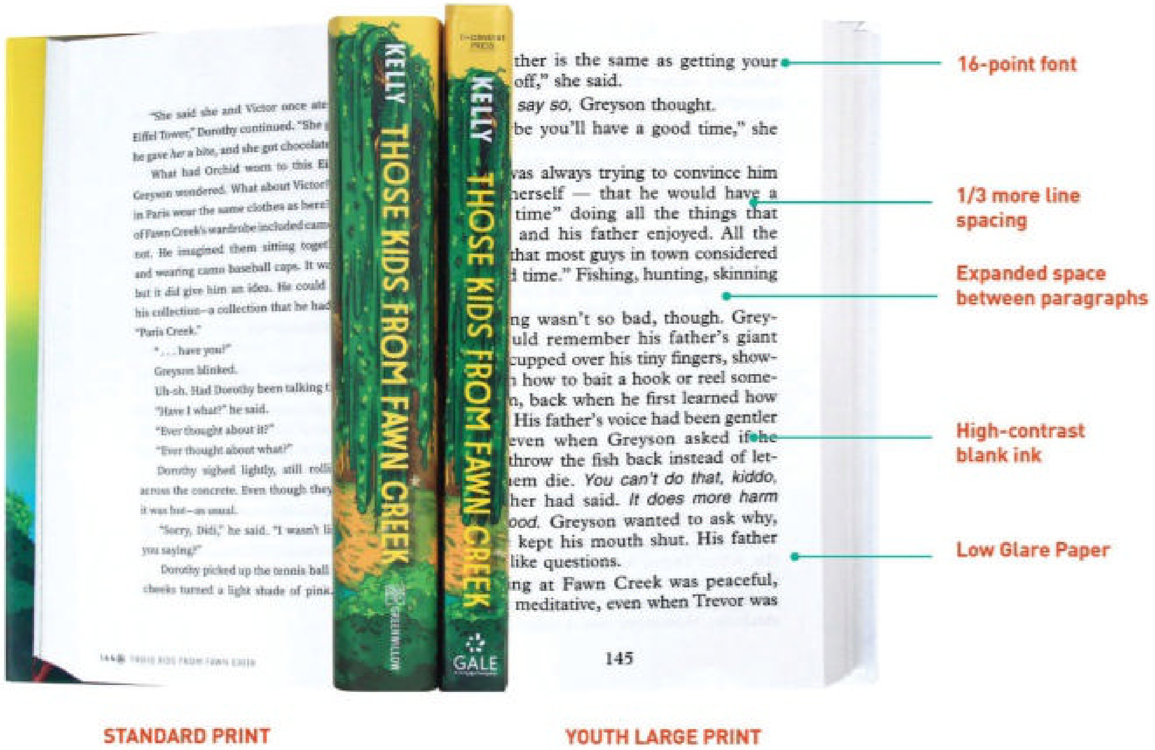
The benefits of large print are innumerable and backed by a recent national study conducted with Project Tomorrow, a nonprofit education organization. According to the study, by virtue of being more legible, large print can specifically help with word decoding and tracking, which facilitates concentration, reading enjoyment, and comprehension overall. In the Project Tomorrow study, 73% of readers in grades three through 12 reported that they spent more time reading when provided with large-print materials, and 43% reported that their anxiety surrounding reading was reduced by reading large print. Fewer words per page means readers can feel gratified by turning pages more quickly, which results in feelings of pride and enjoyment.

Thorndike Press books feature wider margins and line spacing than traditional formats, and the use of serif fonts and dark ink helps to increase legibility. "Youth large-print books make the process of visualizing information easier for readers," Simcock says, "which can lead to reading more often and for longer periods of time."

Large print is also beneficial because of its simplicity and accessibility. Thorndike editors routinely reach out to librarians and educators to determine the needs of student body populations. For English-language learners, for example, 62% of the students studied found greater success by reading large print. "Large-print books support collection equity," Simcock says. And Thorndike makes discoverability easy. Titles can be searched by subject, theme, and interest.

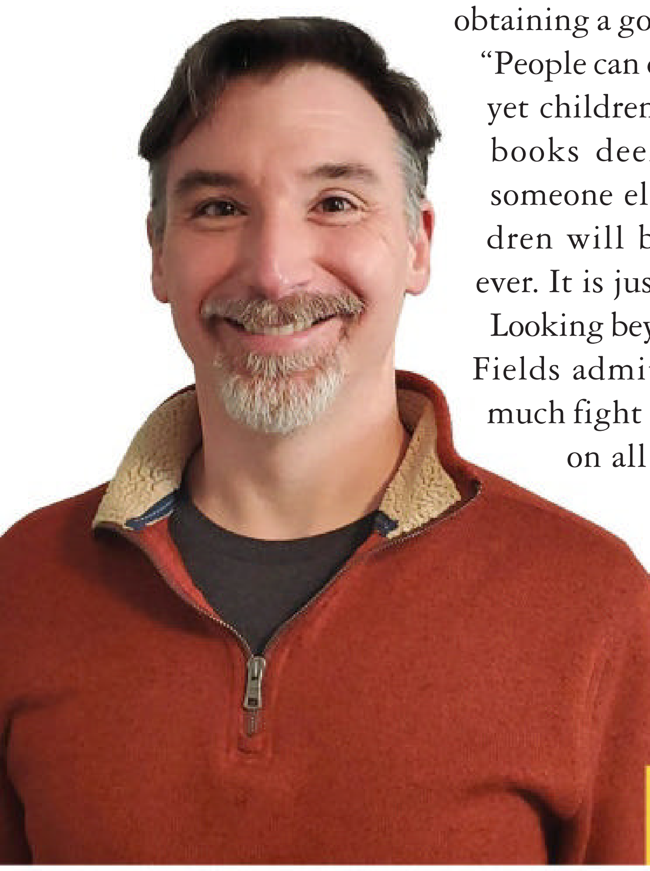
Public libraries can automatically receive a curated collection of large-print titles monthly or seasonally through subscription plans. Simcock's message is simple. "Get a youth large-print edition in your hands, especially if you haven't seen the format in a while," she says. "These aren't the heavy tomes of yesteryear. Once you introduce young readers to large print, those titles won't sit on the shelf."

Thorndike is committed to acquiring books that enrich, challenge, and entice readers of all ages and backgrounds. To ensure that its library remains expansive and relevant to readers, Thorndike is adding at least four titles a month that represent Black authors and two titles a month that represent Asian, Asian American, Pacific Islander, Indigenous, and Latinx/Hispanic authors and stories. Also upcoming is a collection of young adult fiction books in Spanish. "We feature authors and protagonists of traditionally underrepresented groups and content, covering themes from neurodiversity and body positivity to various socioeconomic backgrounds," Simcock says. "Large print is for everyone and we're continuously working to ensure we provide equity in content to match the equitable format."



She points out an even more rattling juxtaposition. July 1 will also usher in Florida's Constitutional Carry law, which allows individuals to carry concealed weapons without obtaining a government-issued permit. "People can carry guns as they choose, yet children will not be able to read books deemed inappropriate by someone else," she says. "Our children will be in more danger than ever. It is just bizarre."

Looking beyond this pivotal summer, Fields admits, "I do not know how much fight I have left in me. Attacks on all sides will wear a person down. I think that next year will be my last. But what scares me the most: What if all librarians here in Florida feel this way? What happens to this generation of readers? Who will fight for their rights under our national constitution?"



***Steve Tetreault**, school library media specialist in the Holmdel Township School District in Holmdel, N.J.*

This emotional and physical stress overload is not limited to school librarians in states with the most book challenges or restrictive education laws, either. "Without a doubt, the current climate in libraries and education has influenced my work as a school librarian," says Steve Tetreault, school library media specialist in the Holmdel Township School District in Holmdel, N.J. "I find myself second-guessing many of my decisions about what to include in displays, and what purchases should be made."

Like many of his colleagues, Tetreault strives to provide unfettered access to a wide range of materials. "There are some items that, while not the right 'fit' for some students, are just right—or maybe even essential—for others," he says. As an example, he cites research studies from the Trevor Project and other sources that have found that LGBTQ youth are four times more likely to die by suicide than their non-LGBTQ peers. "I have heard parents of LGBTQ+ teens who have attempted or committed suicide share how important having support materials available can be for some students."

Tetreault has also heard other mar-

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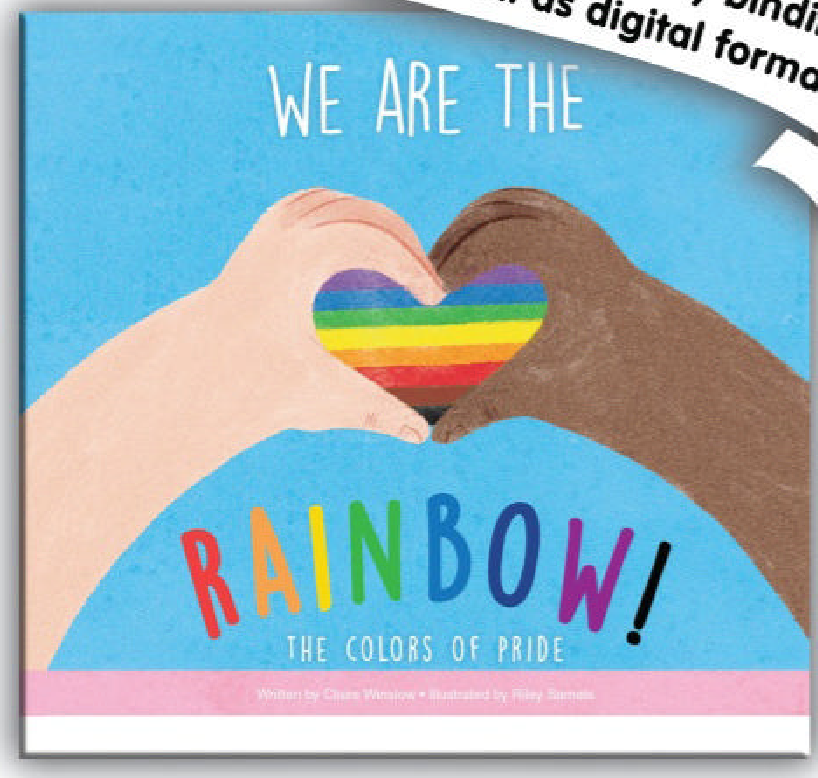

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ginalized students discuss various forms of discrimination they have encountered from their peers. "Providing materials where these students can see themselves and feel seen and represented is important," he says.

"Trying to serve students in need without hanging a target around one's neck has gotten difficult," Tetreault adds. "The climate created by book bans has also led to some internal discussions about collection development and policies for both curating and removing books from the collections of all the libraries in the district."

Where to find help

School librarians across the country routinely say that standing in solidarity is critical to their success, especially in trying times. Fields and Tkacik both praise their district library services administrators in Florida for the steady, passionate support they provide. In New Jersey, Tetreault notes that the New Jersey Association of School Librarians established a Rapid Response Team that will organize volunteers willing to mobilize to defend school librarians and education in their area. Many other resources are available nationwide, and an array of library and education organizations stand ready to help librarians facing censorship issues.

The American Association of School Librarians guides its members—and nonmembers, too—to the ALA's Office for Intellectual Freedom, says AASL president Kathy Lester. "OIF has the expertise to provide confidential, specific support," she says. "We also encourage everyone facing any type of challenge to report to OIF."

Lester says her organization has focused on building community as a way for members to share and support each other via the group's board meetings or chapter assembly meetings as well as in numerous blog posts in AASL's KnowledgeQuest newsletter. She hosted a town hall about supporting school librarians navigating challenges last October, and she and AASL president-elect Courtney Pentland have crowdsourced a list of "Resources for School Library Professionals for Action and Safety During Challenging Times."

Additionally, AASL has teamed with ALA on a number of initiatives surrounding the issue, including an ALA Connect Live Session cohosted by Lester and ALA president Lessa Pelayo-Lazado during National Library Week in April and two webinars earlier this year, created in collaboration with OIF.

"I have spent time with AASL working diligently and collaboratively for about two years with ALA public policy and advocacy staff, as well as staff of Sen. Jack Reed's and

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Rep. Raúl Grijalva's offices to introduce the Right to Read Act in October 2022, and then to reintroduce the Right to Read Act 2023 during National Library Week in April 2023," Lester says. "We are proud that the bills have been endorsed by ALA and AASL, as well as the National Education Association, American Federation of Teachers, National Council of Teachers of English, and PEN America."

For the AASL President's Program at ALA Annual on June 24, Lester will be moderating a "Freedom to Read Ambassadors" panel discussion. "We'll be talking about speaking out for the freedom to read and why it is important for all students to have access to a wide variety of books and information," she says. The panelists include author Kelly Yang (*Front Desk*); Sonja Cherry-Paul, educator, author, and adapter of *Stamped for Kids*; Amanda Jones, 2023 winner of AASL's Intellectual Freedom Award; and Becky Calzada, cofounder of the #FReadom group.

Kathy Lester, *AASL president.*

More generally, in terms of supporting fellow librarians, Tetreault notes that more transparency could help clear up some of the misinformation and misunderstanding that drives parents' concerns in book banning cases. "The more the community is engaged with and aware of how the school library serves all its students, the lower the chance that community members will believe mis- or disinformation," he says.

Another big problem Tetreault sees is that "so many efforts to counter book banning efforts are reactive, rather than proactive," he says. "Building a support network before challenges arrive is the best way to prevent those challenges in the first place."

In speaking with numerous librarian friends who are personally facing book banning efforts, Tetreault hears a common rallying cry. "They've all shared similar advice: get ready, get active, and get loud—whether literally or figuratively."

Similarly, Tkacik's advice for librarians also stresses preparation, knowledge, and courage of conviction. "We need to understand the laws and make the most of our abilities and expertise rather than be frightened by the threat of repercussions," she says. "While new legislation brings challenges and adds to our workload, our students need and deserve access to diverse, rich, meaningful texts, which provide windows, mirrors, and doors to our world. We can't let fear hinder the choices that we provide."

Despite Fields's feelings of frustration and defeat, she says she still has reason to hope. She recalls a quote she recently read, in which Maya Angelou refers to the song lyric, "Every storm runs out of rain." "That's what I believe," Fields says. "For now, I continue to fight in my own way to supply a book for each reader I have in my care. It's exhausting, appalling, terrifying, yet there's determination, too—to keep on giving our kids every chance we can." ■

For a list of Lester's advice for librarians facing censorship, go to publishersweekly.com/kathylester.

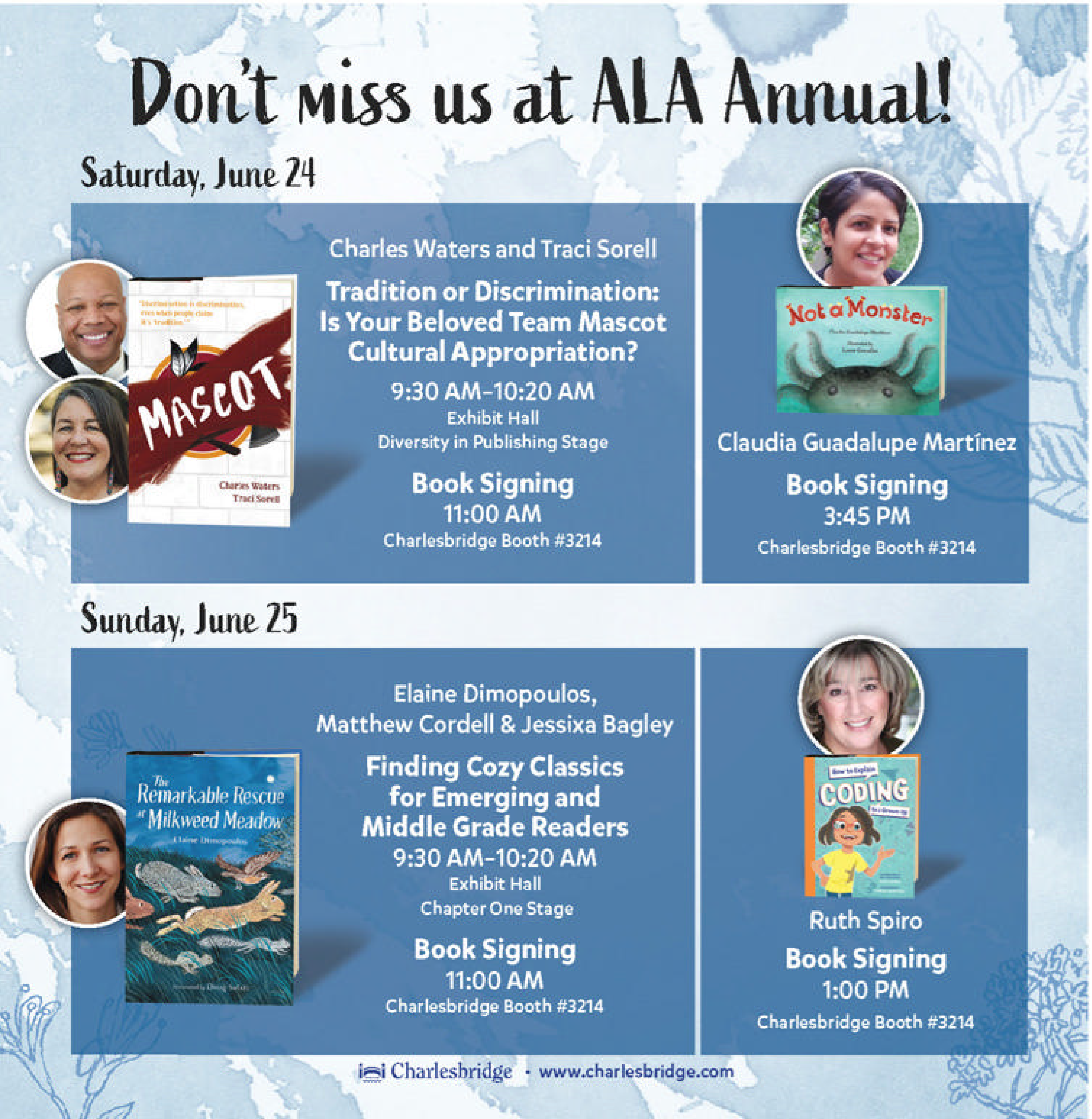

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Exhibit Hall
Diversity in Publishing Stage
Book Signing
11:00 AM
Charlesbridge Booth #3214

Claudia Guadalupe Martínez
Book Signing
3:45 PM
Charlesbridge Booth #3214

Sunday, June 25

Elaine Dimopoulos, Matthew Cordell & Jessixa Bagley
Finding Cozy Classics for Emerging and Middle Grade Readers
9:30 AM–10:20 AM
Exhibit Hall
Chapter One Stage
Book Signing
11:00 AM
Charlesbridge Booth #3214

Ruth Spiro
Book Signing
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THE LIBRARIANS STRIKE BACK

Graphic novel librarians rally to defend the right to read from increasing censorship attempts across the country

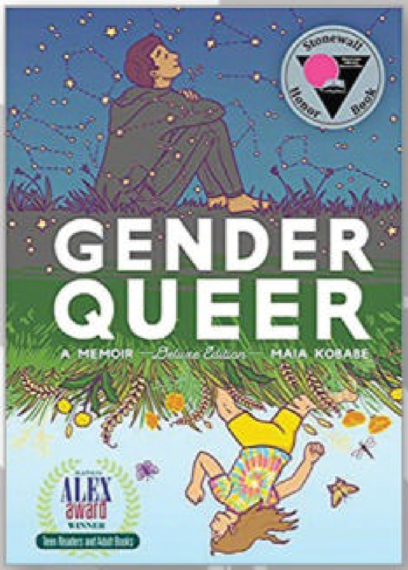
By Heidi MacDonald

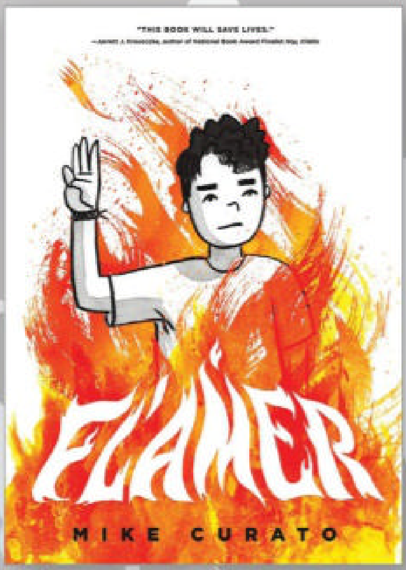
Comics and graphic novels are prime targets in the current battle to ban books at libraries across the country: the most-banned book in the U.S. was once again Maia Kobabe's *Gender Queer*, and others, such as Mike Curato's *Flamer*, Jerry Craft's *New Kid*, Craig Thompson's *Blankets*, and Art Spiegelman's *Maus*, appear on multiple ban lists.

Librarians who have championed the comics form find themselves on the front lines, processing and disputing challenges and helping others counter censorship while facing virulent harassment on social media and even in person. Some have left the profession entirely due to the resultant fatigue and fears for personal safety.

There are some positive signs: key legal victories, and a groundswell of popular support as surveys show the majority of Americans—including parents—are against censorship and pro-library.

But overall, it's a tough situation that has gotten tougher, acknowledges Robin Brenner, teen librarian at the Public Library of Brookline (Mass.) and president of the Graphic Novels and Comics Round Table. The GNCRT is an ALA interest group, now five years old, which helped defenders of the right to read become ever more sophisticated in how they counter challenges. (For more about the GNCRT's other efforts to support librarians, see "Spotlight on ALA Comics Initiatives," p. 67.)





The conflict is "more visible, which in some ways is more helpful," Brenner says. "More people are talking about it and successfully fighting to keep books on the shelves, or stand up to the one person at a school board meeting that's being contrary."

But the onslaught wears out even the most stalwart professionals. Kelly Jensen is a former librarian who covers book censorship news for *Book Riot*. Warnings had been sounded for a while, she says, but the threat was underestimated at first, while groups like Moms for Liberty became "well rehearsed, well funded, and well practiced, and were given a platform by journalists who still believe that you need to cover both sides to any story."

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FREE COMIC DA
LOGAN

Librarian Amie Wright leads the GNCRT's Addressing Challenges Committee.

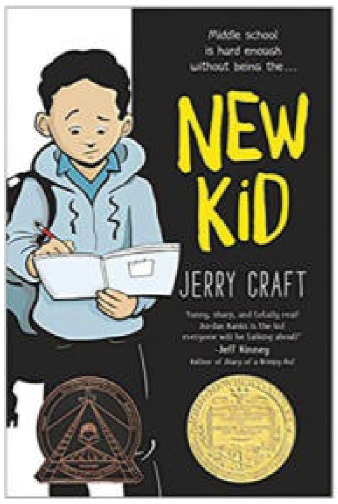
Victories set precedent

Lawyer Jeff Trexler, interim head of the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund (CBLDF), points to recent legislative and legal victories that set precedent to protect the freedom to read. Illinois passed a bill to ban book banning, and last year Trexler contributed to win a key victory for *Gender Queer* in a Virginia court. More and more lawsuits that rely on upholding the First Amendment are being filed.

CBLDF's Jeff Trexler

Recently, PEN America teamed up with Penguin Random House and a group of authors and parents to file a federal lawsuit claiming a Florida school district's removal of books from school libraries violates both the First and 14th Amendments, because the books being targeted are "disproportionately books by non-white and/or LGBTQ+ authors," per the suit. The U.S. Department of Education's civil rights office also issued a decision against book bans, which "created a potentially 'hostile environment' for students, in violation of their civil rights," as *PW* reported in May.

Shira Pilarski, assistant manager of the Detroit Public Library and president-elect of the GNCRT for 2024, applauds the increasing crowd of "people who are supportive and realize that they need to get involved." They mention a high school senior of color in Boise, Idaho, who successfully ran for the school board on a platform of opposition to book banning. "One of the ways that he won was talking about how it was important for him to read books about characters like him," Pilarski says.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Communities are rallying: it turns out libraries are one of the most popular government services. An ALA survey showed that more than 70% of voters oppose censorship, "including majorities of voters across party lines," and attempts to defund libraries have been rebuffed.

"It's becoming more apparent that the people who are calling for censorship actions are in the minority," Trexler says. "A lot more people value the library and the services it provides, and even the fact that it includes certain books."

Brenner says the popularity of graphic novels in libraries for readers has not been quashed, which provides inspiration to weary librarians. Some of the most banned titles are in fact the most in-demand, especially among kids who are nonwhite or queer. "There are so many stories that still need to be told, and kids are finding them in comics more and more," she notes.

Pilarski is keenly aware as a librarian in an urban center of the need to defend diverse books. "If we didn't buy books about BIPOC people, then we wouldn't be reflecting the community," they say.

Jerry Craft, the first cartoonist to win a Newbery for a graphic novel, was initially shocked by the outcry against his graphic novel *New Kid.* "Try growing up Black and see how many uplifting books you had as a kid," he says. "Nobody was trying to save me as a kid. We have all grown up to write the books that we wish we had." (For our q&a with Craft, see "Just Be Better," p. 66.)

A chilling effect

Librarians have always been aware that comics are vulnerable to censorship. The visual medium can make taboo material literally more visible—and easier to take out of context, as shown by the claims that *Gender Queer* is obscene based on a single panel. But "comics are extra vulnerable for challenges, because you already have situations in which the library as a whole is generally not advocating for comics as 'real reading,'" says Amie Wright, the head of GNCRT's Addressing Challenges Committee and a former manager at the New York Public Library.

The struggle is taking a toll. Accused of promoting child pornography and being abusers or "groomers," librarians—especially school librarians—often feel isolated or burned-out. There is a chilling effect, the full extent of which is hard to measure.

"People are afraid," Trexler says. "I get messages all the time asking, 'Am I going to get arrested for buying this book or shelving that one?' "

Even Brenner is apprehensive in her mostly progressive area of Boston, as Pride Month begins. "I've been lucky, but we're all on edge—we have to prepare for backlash," she says.

Some worry that pre-censorship is becoming the norm. Several sources pointed to the recent

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controversy when Scholastic asked author Maggie Tokuda-Hall to remove references to racism in the author's note of *Love in the Library*, her picture book about how her parents met in an incarceration camp for Japanese Americans during World War II.

"Publishers are in a double bind," Trexler says. Threats of boycotts are real, as the zealous reaction to mild displays of support for queer rights by Disney and Anheuser-Busch have shown. "Companies have to answer to shareholders and boards," he explains. So thus far, the public task of defending books has been left largely to individual librarians, or to organizations like the CBLDF and EveryLibrary, a PAC formed a decade ago.

GNCRT president and teen librarian Robin Brenner.

Wright agrees that reactions from publishers haven't been aggressive, but hopes that may change, as PRH's involvement in PEN America's lawsuit suggests they might. Librarians, she says, need to make a case for their influence in the overall graphic novel publishing business. "So much of Scholastic's business is comics. Even in school libraries, 40%–75% of a collection's circulation is graphic novels, according to various surveys. Let's discuss return on investment, circulation and statistics, growth over time."

Even as the number of challenges has soared, some worst-case scenarios remain hypothetical. Despite threats, according to Trexler, he's not aware of any librarian who has been arrested over a book staying on shelves—yet. "There have been librarians who have been shut down or fired," he says. "It's hard to criticize someone who is in jeopardy of losing their job."

Standing up for the right to read

Librarians defending their collections have an arsenal of new resources, including guides from PEN America, the ALA, GNCRT, Penguin Random House, and other support organizations. Some librarians are discovering the best tool to counter challenges is their existing library policies, Brenner says. For example, a standard rule in many libraries is that once a book is challenged, it can't be challenged again for two years, to prevent so-called nuisance challenges. More libraries are insisting that only members of their local communities can lodge challenges. School libraries are investigating whether challengers have children who currently attend their schools—or whether they are even parents.

Another basic policy requires that the challenger have read the entire book—often, they haven't. "It seems irrational, but the first question a librarian asks should be, 'Did you read this book entirely?' " Wright says.

"For comics," Brenner says, "librarians should ask what

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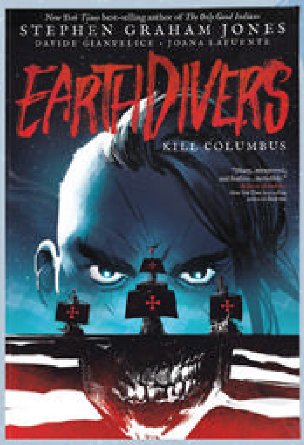

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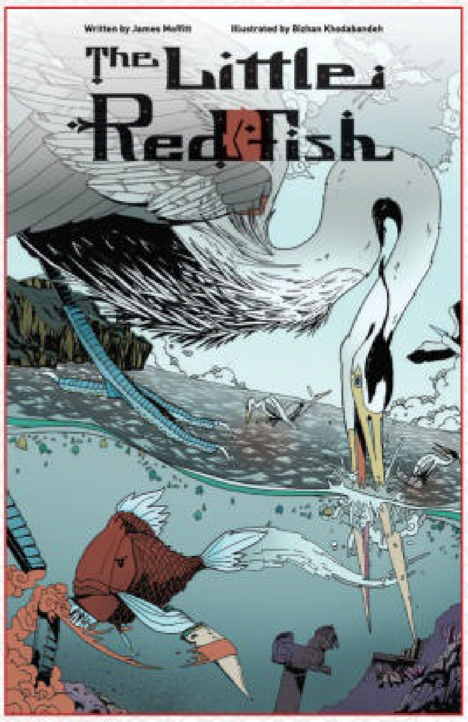

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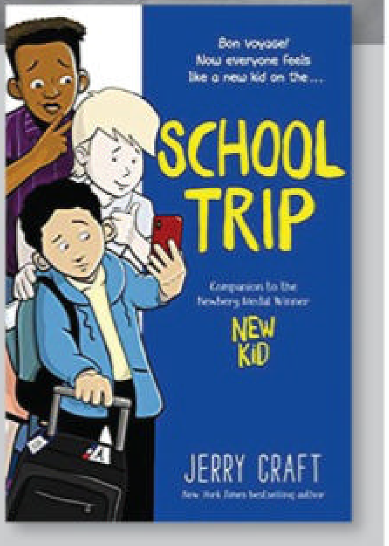
Just Be Better

PW talks with Jerry Craft

Jerry Craft's *New Kid*, the first graphic novel to win the Newbery Award, is a gentle middle grade tale with an anti-bullying message, based on Craft's own experiences as a Black student at a predominantly white private school. The series has been targeted by groups that want to remove it from school libraries—and some have succeeded. Craft is currently on a promotional tour for the third title in the trilogy, *School Trip*.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NEW KID
JERRY CRAFT
New York Times bestselling author

Is it true that elementary school kids can't read *New Kid* in the Esambia County, Fla., school system?

They did take it out of the elementary school, but luckily they left it for middle school and high school. There's a heartbreaking video that PEN America shared. This kid is nine years old, and on a day when he should have been out playing with his friends or reading a good book, he is dressed up and speaking in front of the school board to defend *New Kid*. He says, "This book taught me that it's not okay to be mean to people, that everyone has a story. It makes me want to listen, and treat people better. So please don't take this book off the shelves."

In general, would you say that *New Kid* has been upheld more than it's been removed?

Yes, if there is a school board that actually does their job and reads the book. No one has ever said, "My kid read this and came to me, saying, Mom, I feel guilty for being white because I read *New Kid*." I'm a father, and I do have the right to tell my kids what video games they could play. That is every parent's right. But if I'm raising my kid to be a vegetarian, that doesn't give me the right to slap a hamburger out of your kid's hands. That's what these people are doing—no hamburgers, for anyone.

You've done a lot of big press appearances. How has that gone?

I think initially my publisher might have been a little nervous about me going on Don Lemon and Joy Reid and NPR because everyone is looking for a sound bite. But I was just hoping that if they saw me as a person they'd see who I am, someone who's spent my life coaching my kids' baseball teams and basketball teams.

Has the tour for *School Trip* been affected by the controversy?

If I was starting from scratch, I would not know that there was any kind of adversity. I'm drawing cartoons, and talking about the importance of reading, and empathy, and that school should be a safe place for everyone. We should all just be better.

—H.M.

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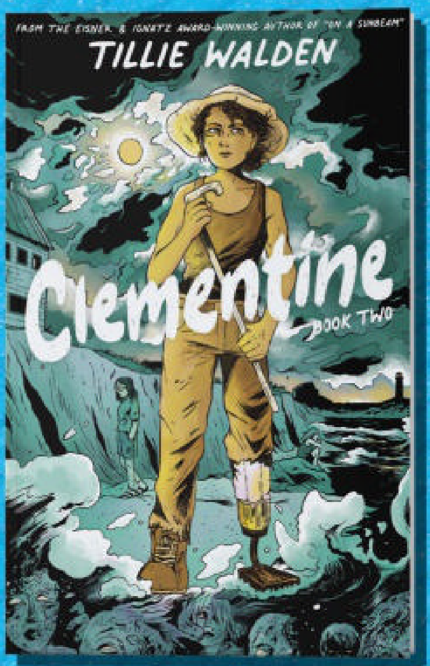
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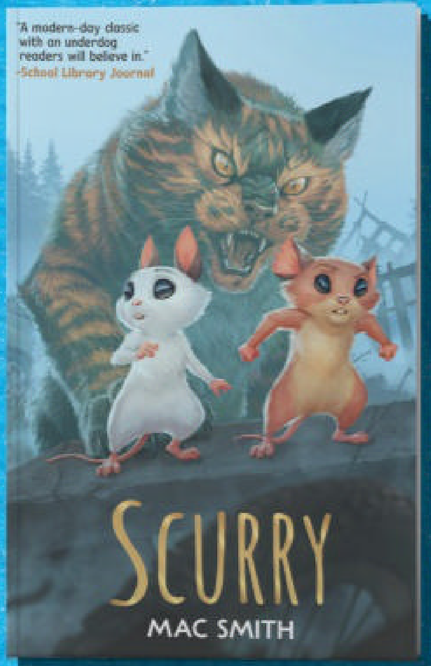
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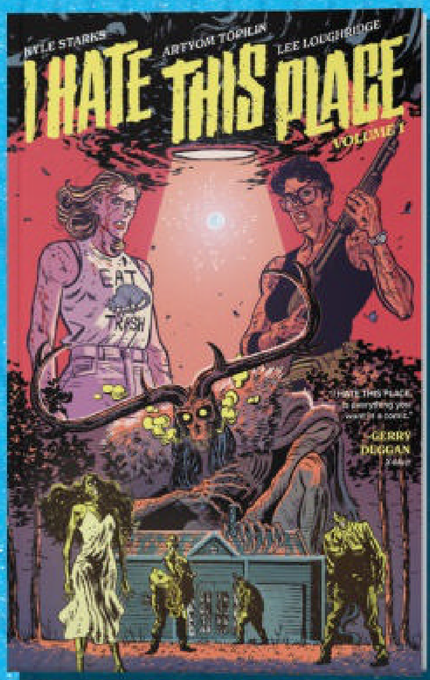
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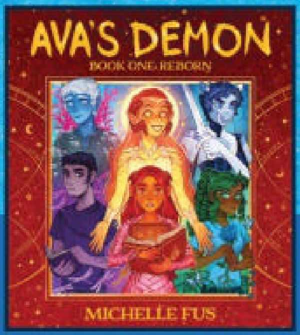
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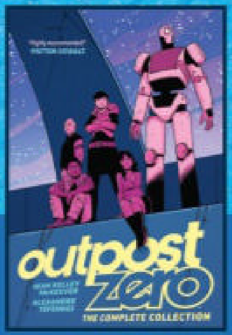
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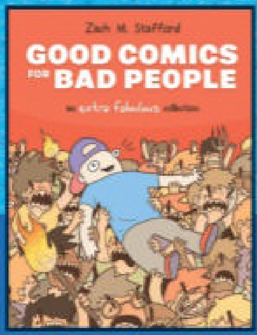
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image, what page, and why. They should contextualize this image in the entire book." She adds that complaints are often based on "extraordinarily skewed" talking points. "They say, 'I don't want to expose myself' to the material they're challenging. Basically, there is no logic."

The GNCRT assembled a tool kit aimed at presenting "real, pragmatic, concrete advice about what your collection development policy and challenge policy should look like," Wright says. She also advises that issues unique to comics and graphic novels need to be addressed in library policies. "One of the things we've heard is that even now, most libraries don't actually talk about bans and challenges in advance," she says. "It's depressing to need to be prepared, like having active shooter drills."

Trexler says that another key is knowing that *obscenity* has a legal definition, despite how often it's thrown around.

Wright agrees that letting librarians know that they have legal rights is important. "Just because someone comes in and says *Gender Queer* is obscene, doesn't mean that it is," she explains. "It has to be proven in a court of law."

Trexler sees the very ferocity of the campaign to suppress stories about gender and race as a sign that challengers know they are on the wrong side of history. "It's a deep-seated feeling that they've already lost," he says. "There's a

Shira Pilarski

Spotlight on ALA Comics Initiatives

The ALA's Graphic Novels and Comics Roundtable is rolling out new initiatives geared toward serving and supporting librarians

➤ GETTING TOGETHER

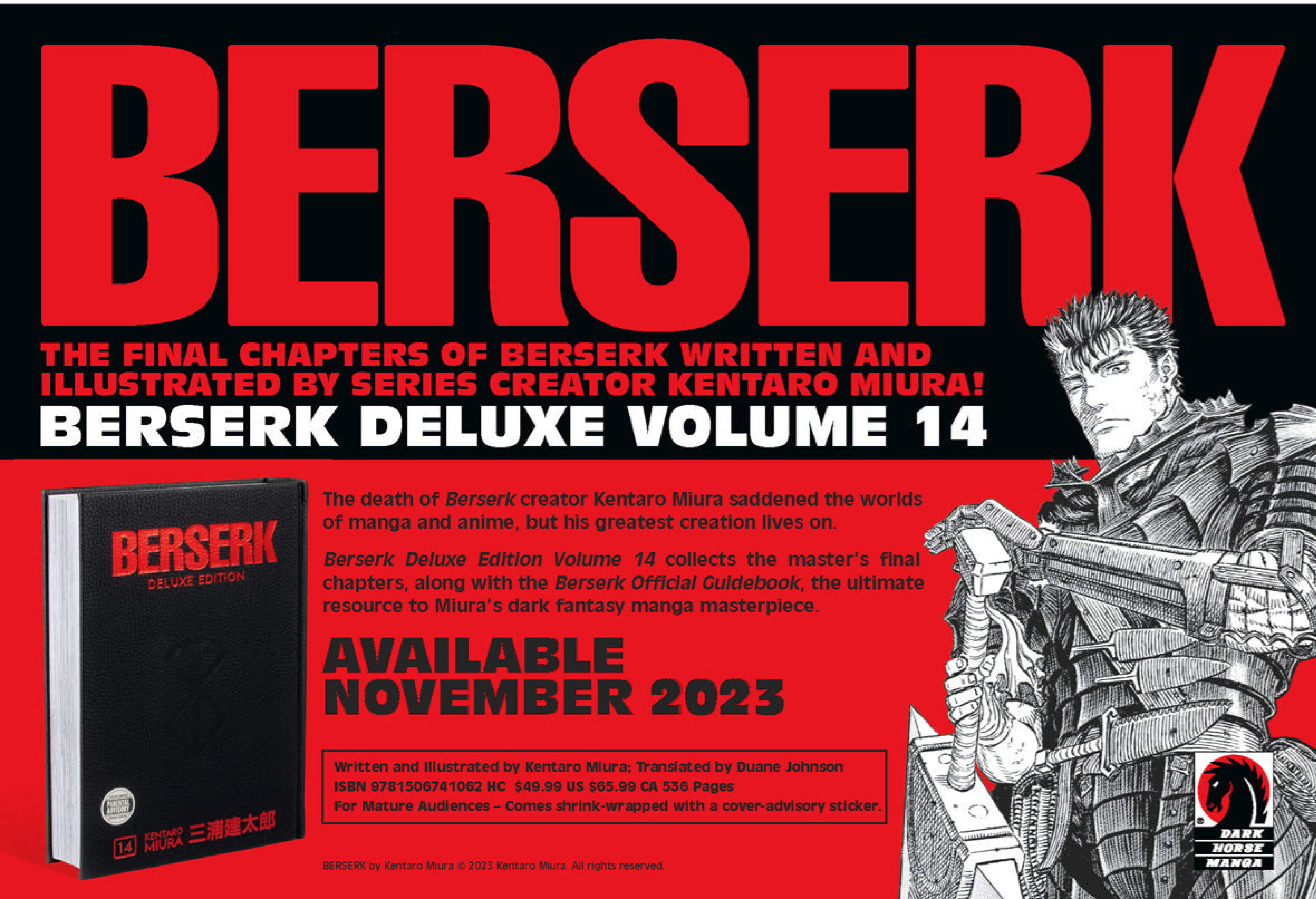
With live events coming back full steam, the GNCRT's conventions committee is working on how to rebuild programming and networking at local and national comics fan events, says GRCNT president Robin Brenner, with the goal of giving local groups more tools to participate.

➤ GETTING TO ANNUAL

The newly established GNCRT Comics Librarian Conference Travel Grant will allow two librarians who may not otherwise have funding to attend this year's ALA annual meeting, which runs June 22–27 in Chicago. The grant was sponsored in 2023 by Image Comics and its imprint Skybound, but the goal is to turn it into a general donation fund and expand it to cover librarian attendance at many comics-focused events, such as the San Diego Comic-Con, according to GNCRT president-elect Shira Pilarski.

➤ GETTING THE DATA

GNCRT members have been tackling the thorny problem of how the Library of Congress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sense that graphic novels are everywhere—that the depiction of these relationships and racial questions are everywhere and will be part of schools and libraries. What people are doing is raging against the whirlwind."

But Jensen, of *Book Riot*, isn't so sure. "I'm cynical, having done this for so long," she says. "Even if we take down Moms for Liberty, these other groups are proliferating. I think we're in an era where this is going to continue—and one of the biggest problems is the lack of literacy about how to read and understand graphic material."

The toll taken on librarians will linger, Brenner acknowledges. "Going through a challenge is incredibly personal and exhausting," she says. "If you're the school librarian trying to make a place for these kids, being targeted feels very lonely and very isolating."

Trexler hopes that advocates begin to recognize censorship as a "wedge issue." He points to large numbers of people who are campaigning against censorship getting on school boards nationwide. "I do think we're going to win out again, but it's going to take some time," he says. "And we're going to have to be more sophisticated."

"I don't want to focus on an end in sight," says Detroit public librarian Pilarski. "We're going to keep fighting, because that's what we do."

uses metadata to categorize comics. Last year the GNCRT's Metadata and Cataloging Committee delivered a report calling for, among others things, the term *manga* to be added to the LoC's Genre/Form Terms. There's a "lack of consistency and uniformity around the way comics were collected," says committee member Amie Wright. Better defined metadata will make comics more accessible and discoverable.

➤ GOING INTERNATIONAL

The GNRCT is spreading. Australia's equivalent of the ALA has established its own graphic novel focused organization, ALIA Graphic Novels and Comics.

➤ GOING FOR GOLD

Establishing a comics award presented by libraries along the lines of the Newbery or the Alex Awards has been a longtime GNCRT goal. As exciting as the prospect is, librarians are characteristically deliberative planners. In 2022, an exploratory committee was launched. Pilarski highlighted that "one of the goals will be to reach out to other awards committees," in order to determine "the best practices." GNCRT will also debate what categories of awards to give out, and what titles would qualify. "Self-publishing, Kickstarter, web comics—there is so much to think about," Pilarski says. —H.M.

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TIME BANDITS

In her third novel, Edan Lepucki explores mother-daughter relationships among generations of women with a special gift

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By Alyssa Ages

Edan Lepucki was an unknown first-time author when she received a call most writers only dream about: a producer from the *Colbert Report* wanted to feature Lepucki's debut novel, *California*, on the show. It was 2014, and Stephen Colbert's publisher, Hachette, had been waging war with Amazon over the retailer's e-book pricing policy. Colbert wanted a Hachette title to promote—one he could encourage viewers to buy from independent booksellers.

"My husband and I watched the show, and he said, 'This is gonna sell like 400 copies, it's gonna be great,' " Lepucki, 42, recalls, speaking from her Los Angeles home office, where she's seated in front of shelves overflowing with books.

The book did a little better than that. *California* became one of the most preordered titles in the publisher's history and was an instant bestseller.

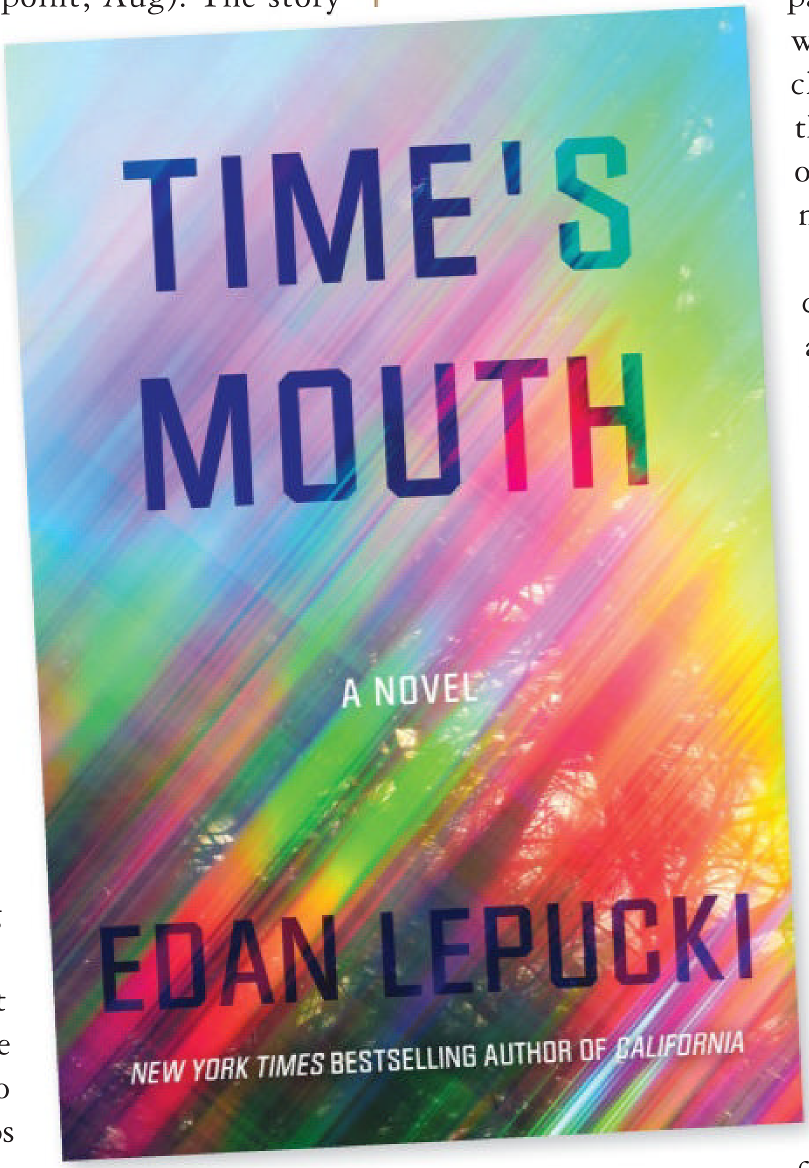
"I just kinda rode the ride," Lepucki says. "I got to go on a tour, I was on [*The Colbert Report*], I got to be a bestseller, I got to sell another book for a lot of money—it was amazing!"

Following up on a successful first novel is challenging for any author. Attempting to match this kind of accomplishment is near impossible. "I was getting so much free press that I was like, wow, it really takes being hit by lightning to get attention for a book," she says. "That was clear to me. I have had books after that that nobody was talking about. And so that was also kind of sobering to be like, okay, this is how the book business works, this kind of sucks."

While Lepucki's next novel didn't have the same launch buzz, it performed well by any standard. *Woman No. 17* was named a best book of the year by the *Washington Post* and the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

Though she remains grateful for the "Colbert bump," Lepucki prefers to look to the future. "Whatever happened to me happened," she says. "It was fun. And that's all I'm going to say about it."

In the midst of that whirlwind, Lepucki began to write her latest novel, *Time's Mouth* (Counterpoint, Aug). The story follows three generations of a family, two of which can travel into their own memories and watch their past experiences while remaining largely powerless to make any changes. Ursa first learns of her ability as a teenager and uses it to revisit happier moments in a childhood that was rife with abuse. After escaping her mother and fleeing to California, she becomes the focal point of a community of women, many pregnant or toting newborns.



The women are drawn to Ursa in large part because, when she time travels, those around her get intense full-body highs. But Ursa secretly knows her otherworldly gift comes with a dark side: if she travels too far, the high that the women around her experience can become overwhelming and crushing.

While *Time's Mouth* is partially about what can happen when we live in the past at the cost of the present, it's also about the way we navigate relationships with our parents, the secrets we keep, and how we pass our trauma down to our children. Ursa, having fled her abusive home, goes on to neglect her own son, Ray (the product of a one-night stand), who then leaves her. Ray's lover, Cherry, was abandoned by her mother when she was an infant; Cherry then abandons her daughter, Opal, leaving Ray to raise her. Opal, who can also time travel, uses her ability to be near the mother she never knew.

The complexity of parent-child relationships, particularly the ones between mothers and daughters, is familiar to Lepucki, who is a mother of three. It's something she explored in her two previous novels. She also wrote a polarizing 2021 essay for the *New York Times* titled "Don't Play with Your Kids. Seriously" that made the case for letting children play on their own. The piece racked up more than 800 comments. In an article she wrote for *Romper*, she declared, "I am not an ideal mother. I don't want to be. I want to be human." She created the @mothersbefore Instagram account, and edited a book inspired by its posts about women before they became mothers.

"I really bristle at this idea of new styles of parenting that will undo trauma," Lepucki says. "Life is so much messier than a script of what I should say to my kid when they're not putting on their socks. My kids have so many crazy things happening to them all the time, and I'm like, 'Welcome to life, it's so messy.' "

Lepucki's raw honesty in both her fiction and journalism is part of what draws readers to her work. Within her fiction, Lepucki's characters, imbued with a depth that allows the reader to love them on one page and loathe them on the next, make her work compelling.

"I knew Edan had the ability to construct really great characters and inventive plots, but I was surprised at the depths we uncovered in *Time's Mouth*," says her editor, Dan Smetanka. "From certain seeds of ideas grew a wild and compelling garden, a page-turning narrative, and characters that burst off the page."

In *Time's Mouth*, when Ursa and Opal transport, they are able to not only view the past but sense all the same feelings they had in that moment. Watching their past selves, they view the joy or grief or confusion they experienced. Though the temptation is there for Lepucki, especially given the wild highs she's lived through in her career, after finishing *Time's Mouth*, she believes it's best to stay grounded in the present.

"There are certain moments in my life that I would just love to be in again," Lepucki says. "I would love to stand in my husband's first, shitty studio apartment one more time. I would love to pick up my children again for the first time, hold them, and feel what that was like. But then again, isn't that what living is? To not have that anymore? I feel like I'm supposed to learn a lesson from my book, which is that is you shouldn't—you can't—go backwards." ■

Alyssa Ages is the author of Secrets of Giants, A Journey to Uncover the True Meaning of Strength.

Reviews

Fiction

★ Every Drop Is a Man's Nightmare

Megan Kamalei Kakimoto. Bloomsbury, $27.99 (272p) ISBN 978-1-63973-116-9

Kakimoto interweaves themes of sexual desire and fertility with Hawaiian mythology in her unflinching debut collection. In the title story, 12-year-old Sadie transports pork leftovers from a party via the Pali Highway, risking the wrath of Kamapua‘a, the Hawaiian fire goddess Pele's ex-lover, who is half man, half pig and curses anyone bringing pork over the old Pali road. Sadie's transgression may have incurred a lifetime of bad luck, beginning when her family's car hits a wild boar. Years later, the injured pig mysteriously replaces Sadie's baby in the child's bassinet. "Hotel Molokai" recalls the time the 13-year-old narrator's grandmother brought her to visit family on the island and make a pilgrimage to a sacred rock imbued with powerful fertility magic. Thinking of her abused cousin, a teenage boy, the narrator wonders why her family should want more children when they don't take good care of the ones they have. In "Ms. Amelia's Salon for Women in Charge," working-poor Kehaulani, whose banker boyfriend likes her to get her genitals waxed, goes to a new salon where she must choose a personality trait to give up in exchange for her waxing. Distinguished by the author's wry sense of humor and unerring touch for the surreal, these stories add up to a powerful exploration of gender, class, race, colonialism, and domestic violence. This eloquent outing marks Kakimoto as a writer to watch. *Agent: Iwalani Kim, Sanford J. Greenburger Assoc. (Aug.)*

Mobility

Lydia Kiesling. Crooked Media, $28 (368p) ISBN 978-1-63893-056-3

Kiesling (*The Golden State*) takes on the global petroleum industry in this politically astute novel. Fifteen-year-old Elizabeth "Bunny" Glenn is the daughter of an American diplomat in newly independent Azerbaijan in 1998, with a front-row seat to the geopolitical scrambling underway for the nation's vast oil reserves. Fast-forward a decade and Bunny lands in East Texas with her divorced mother, after her father ends the marriage while on an overseas assignment. As Bunny makes her own way in Texas, she's galled by her mother's reminders of the opportunities afforded her by her well-to-do upbringing. She eventually finds a job in the renewable energy branch of oil company Turnbridge, and shakes off her vague unease at joining the fossil fuel industry by "pushing the energy side, the future-casting side" of her work. The story then skips to 2051, when natural disasters plague the planet and oil and gas companies have "destabilized nations," and Bunny still rationalizes her prior work with Turnbridge as being energy-focused. Kiesling brilliantly captures the swashbuckling arrogance and louche misbehavior of Americans pushing capitalism abroad (where the smell of oil is "the smell of money"), and the consequences of Bunny's choices are clearly drawn and factually sound. The result is an impressively original contribution to the emerging literature of climate change. *(Aug.)*

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Megan Kamalei Kakimoto's Every Drop Is a Man's Nightmare *blends myth and reality with stories of women in modern-day Hawaii (reviewed on this page).*

Liquid Snakes

Stephen Kearse. Soft Skull, $27 (320p) ISBN 978-1-59376-751-8

Kearse's latest (after *In the Heat of the Light*) is a dazzling pharmacological thriller that dances on the knife's edge of satire. The prologue sets the tone for the semi-speculative story to come, laying out the license agreement for a dangerous new app called EightBall in mind-numbing fine print. Nestled within are some strange and ominous warnings, however: "You do not need permission to be free, but you might need weapons." At Atlanta's Harriet Tubman Leadership Academy, high school student Valencia McCormick dies after ingesting a glowing black liquid, and Centers for Disease Control epidemiologists Ebonee McCollum and Retta Vickers are sent to determine if she is the latest victim of the city's suicide epidemic. They discover that the deaths are linked to a complex project of extermination, developed by Black biochemist Kenny Bomar and capitalized on by his friend Thurgood Houser. Euphemistically called blackouts, the deaths are caused by a toxic chemical Bomar designed to allow Black people the chance to choose their own death as a stand against racial discrimination. Written with incisive wit and studded with references to Black popular culture (Retta's college "foray into radicalism" included listening to musical group the Soulquarians) and troubling incidents from recent history, this entertains even as it deeply disturbs. *(Aug.)*

Las Madres

Esmeralda Santiago. Knopf, $28 (336p) ISBN 978-0-307-96261-4

Santiago (*Conquistadora*) delivers an immersive intergenerational saga set in New York City, Maine, and Puerto Rico. Lesbian couple Ada and Shirley and their friend Luz are the "las madres" of the title; Luz's daughter Marysol, whose apartment is across the hall from her mom's in the Bronx, and Ada and Shirley's daughter Graciela, who lives near her mothers in coastal Maine, are "las nenas." Marysol and Graciela were born in the U.S. but feel a visceral attachment to Puerto Rico, their mothers' "homeland." As the group prepares for a trip to the island to celebrate Shirley's 70th birthday in 2017, Graciela, who has been told by Ada and Shirley that she was conceived by Ada in a long-forgotten one-night stand, "wonders whether DNA testing might shed some light on her parentage." Meanwhile, flashbacks to mid-1970s Puerto Rico recount an accident that left an adolescent Luz with a traumatic brain injury, and when an unexpected turn of events brings the group to familiar Puerto Rican neighborhoods, long-held family secrets threaten to surface. Santiago wrings palpable emotion from her characters, and hauntingly portrays Hurricane María's devastating effect on the island. There are false notes, including Graciela's characterization-via-hashtag ("She considers herself #spiritual"), but also a profound sincerity. This tenderhearted story of trauma and recovery has undeniable appeal. *(Aug.)*

In the Lobby of the Dream Hotel

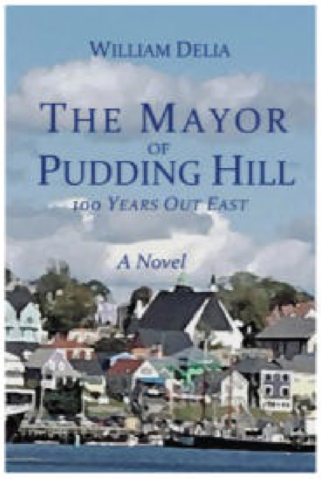
Genevieve Plunkett. Catapult, $28 (368p) ISBN 978-1-646-22048-9

In Plunkett's perceptive debut novel, a young mother and musician struggles with bipolar disorder and her controlling husband. Portia Elby is 20 years old and a recent college dropout when she's first admitted to a psychiatric hospital. After she's discharged, and still wearing the hospital's plastic ID bracelets, she meets Nathan, a prosecutor 11 years her senior, who initially seems fascinated by the "young and troubled" woman. Their relationship progresses to marriage and pregnancy within a few years, and Portia, whose rock group Poor Alice has developed a "small following" in Vermont, tries to balance motherhood and marriage with the "sacred" intimacy of being in a band. Nathan grows increasingly bothered by Portia's need for affection and her tendency to daydream, and his frustration culminates when he finds out she's stopped taking her bipolar medication because she's worried it's stifling her creativity—and has started an affair with Theo, the band's drummer. Short, intense chapters reflect Portia's mental state and preoccupation with finding what she really wants out of life ("Sometimes I feel like I have to choose myself again every day. From scratch"), and the story's momentum dwindles and surges along with her moods. Amid the turbulence, an incisive portrait emerges of mental health and the search for autonomy. *Agent: Reiko Davis, DeFiore & Co. (Aug.)*

The Mayor of Pudding Hill: 100 Years Out East

William Delia. William Delia, $11.99 trade paper (284p) ISBN 979-8-4253-9103-2

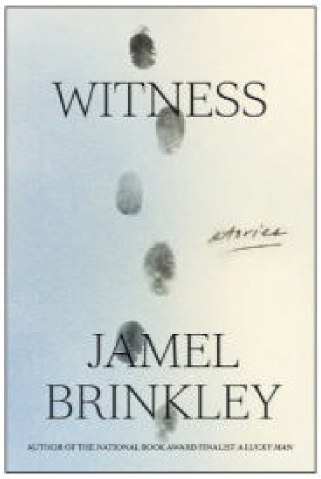
A journalist documents a centenarian's role in pivotal moments of 20th-century Canadian history in the folksy latest from Delia (*Shelter from the Storm*). On assignment for a Nova Scotia newspaper, Caleb MacKenzie attends Albie Albertson's 100th birthday party. After hearing bits of Albie's impressive life story, Caleb insists to his editor that they expand the piece into a series of articles. During the next months, Albie details surviving the 1942 sinking of the *Bluenose* cruise ship in the Caribbean; his heroic efforts during the Springhill Mine disaster in 1958; his knowledge of a 1967 UFO sighting; and his presence in Gander, Newfoundland, in the aftermath of 9/11, when the town hosted stranded airline passengers. Meanwhile, Caleb starts dating Albie's granddaughter Sarah Chase, a history professor, and Albie carries on a romance with fellow nursing home resident Rosie, who claims she survived the sinking of the *Titanic*. Conflict ensues after Rosie's daughter tries to break up the couple, convinced her mother's *Titanic* story is a fabrication and that Caleb is taking advantage of them to further his career. As Caleb and Sarah seek to find out what's true and what's not, Delia pulls together an affecting yarn with a rewarding resolution. Readers are in for a treat. *(Self-published)*



★ Witness

Jamel Brinkley. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, $26 (240p) ISBN 978-0-374-60703-6

In his radiant sophomore collection, Brinkley (*A Lucky Man*) digs into the promises and dangers of intimacy and the costs of speaking up or staying silent. In the title story, a Black woman named Bernice, who is suffering from an unknown illness, advises her brother "when it… comes to those white doctors… always, *always,* exaggerate the pain." In "Comfort," Kelvin selflessly cares for Simone, a woman whose life has been derailed by her brother's killing by police officers years earlier. "Bartow Station" centers on a young man who is unwilling to get help to deal with a past tragedy and is warned by the woman he's dating that "one day it will all come out as a violence, like water spewing forth from a hose." Elsewhere, a lonely woman imagines a deeper connection with a food delivery person, and a young father tries to justify relocating his aging father to assisted living. Throughout, Brinkley crafts unforgettable portraits, humming with barely restrained tension, of Black men and women exploring what it means to be part of families and communities that are awash in hope and disappointment alike. These intimate vignettes have the power to move readers. *(Aug.)*



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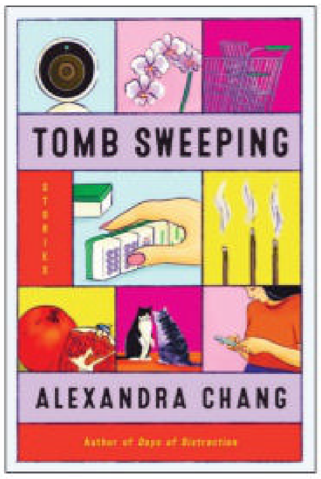
★ Tomb Sweeping: Stories

Alexandra Chang. Ecco, $18.99 (256p) ISBN 978-0-06-295184-7



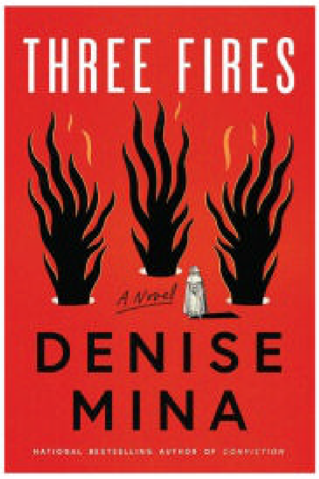
Chang (*Days of Distraction*) explores the meaning of home in her powerful and delightfully strange debut collection. After the 30-something narrator of "Unknown by Unknown" loses her job to a more efficient software program, she takes a month-long house-sitting gig in a luxurious Northern California home. There, she lies out on the deck as "flat and still as a corpse in a bikini" and imagines herself "slowly cooking like an animal on a spit.... as though I were dissolving.... Occasionally, the sensation frightened me, but most of the time I was relieved." The elegant and compressed "Li Fan" starts with the death of a woman named Mrs. Shum from a stroke, then tells of how she came to live in a rundown boardinghouse and collect bottles and cans. The residents of the neighborhood where she picks up the redeemables call her "the Asian recycling lady," but they don't know she used to have a home there with her husband, that they came from Wuhan, and that she once nurtured dreams of a career in government. In "A Visit," a young woman reconnects with her peripatetic father after he travels from Northern California to see her in Upstate New York. It takes getting up close to recognize him; at first, all she sees are the "curves and juts of a skull... beneath weathered skin." Chang's distinctive style and wry tone bring her characters to startling life, all the while rendering the pain of their loneliness and desire for stability in stark relief. This is a triumph. *Agent: Alexa Stark, Writers House. (Aug.)*

Mystery/Thriller

★ Three Fires

Denise Mina. Pegasus Crime, $22 (352p) ISBN 978-1-63936-455-8

Mina (*Rizzio*) fictionalizes the life of Dominican friar Girolamo Savonarola (1452–1498), who was executed for heresy, in this vivid historical thriller. The novel opens in 1498 Florence, with Savonarola reading a coerced confession stating that he's been lying about having the gift of prophecy. It then flashes back nearly 30 years, to when Savonarola's hopes for marriage and a successful career as a physician are dashed, setting him on the path to religious fanaticism. Even readers who know what comes next—namely, the 1497 Bonfire of the Vanities, in which Savonarola and his followers burned books and clothes and other "extravagances" all across Florence—will be captivated by Mina's lyricism (reading his confession to the assembled crowd, Savonarola sees "the dust motes swimming aimlessly in the warm air above their heads and imagines that each speck is an iota of faith leaving a person in the room") and the insightful connections she draws between medieval ideological battles and 21st-century culture wars. This is masterful. *(Aug.)*



* * *

Things Get Ugly: The Best Crime Fiction of Joe R. Lansdale

Joe R. Lansdale. Tachyon, $19.95 trade paper (352p) ISBN 978-1-61696-396-5

This mixed-bag collection of 19 stories from Edgar winner Lansdale (*A Fine Dark Line*) features violent tales set mostly in East Texas. The highlight is "The Shadows, Kith and Kin," an atmospheric and inspired attempt to get into the head of Charles Whitman, who, in 1966, climbed to the top of a tower at the University of Texas and gunned down random passersby. Lansdale uses the present tense to create a sense of immediacy as Whitman prepares for his murderous rampage, fueled by visions of faceless, shadowy figures. "Incident on and off a Mountain Road," about a woman's desperate efforts to escape a psychopath, is also memorable, despite a familiar plotline. Elsewhere, innovative premises are poorly executed; "Mr. Bear," which features a drunken, anthropomorphized version of Smokey the bear, is a muddle that doesn't work as satire or horror. Lansdale fans may find enough to enjoy here, but first-timers would be better served to start with the novels. *Agent: Danny Baror, Baror International. (Aug.)*

* * *

The Hurricane Blonde

Halley Sutton. Putnam, $18 trade paper (384p) ISBN 978-0-593-42189-5

Sutton's gritty sophomore effort (after 2020's *The Lady Upstairs*) immerses readers in the underbelly of Hollywood. Former child actor Salma Lowe has a past overloaded with trauma: her famous parents are philandering alcoholics; her beloved starlet sister, Tawney, was brutally murdered 20 years earlier; and Salma herself was raped as a teen, causing her to leave show business and fall into drug addiction. Now in recovery, Salma runs bus tours of places where famous women, including her sister, met tragic ends. But when Tawney's former fiancé, "the most dangerous director in Hollywood," begins filming a movie about Tawney, and Salma finds the lead actress drowned in the pool of Tawney's former home, her fragile sense of stability begins to crack. Sutton's prose can be overwrought ("Minutes slipped out of my clock and rearranged themselves into an internal logic that didn't have any use for time"), but she effectively conjures a seedy Los Angeles where directors exploit women, police disbelieve victims, and members of the press are soulless vipers. That atmosphere, plus intriguing true Hollywood lore about Marilyn Monroe, Sharon Tate, and other stars who've died tragically, keeps the pages turning. It's an acid-washed treat for fans of L.A. noir. *Agent: Sharon Pelletier; Dystel, Goderich & Bourret. (Aug.)*

* * *

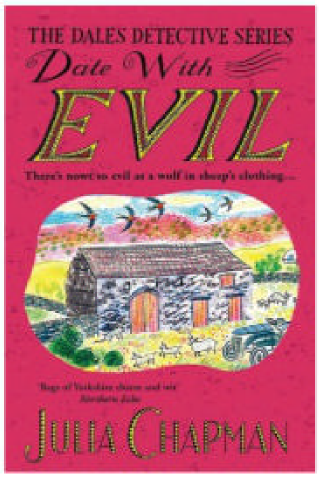
In Her Blood

Caro Ramsay. Severn House, $31.99 (256p) ISBN 978-1-4483-0676-3

Ramsay's gripping second case for DCI Christine Caplan (after 2022's *The Devil Stone*) finds the Glaswegian investigator finishing up her three-month assignment in the small Highland village of Cronchie. Well aware of the strains her absence has put on her marriage, Caplan is eager to return home, but her departure is interrupted by a phone call: the body of a man has been pulled from the icy waters below Connel Bridge. At first, the death is ruled a suicide, but when evidence emerges that the man was stabbed before he drowned, Caplan must track down "Britain's Most Evil Woman," an 18-year-old who's just been released from a residential center for disturbed children, where she's been ever since rumors emerged that she killed her younger sister. Angry vigilantes, convinced the timing of the teen's release means she's responsible for this latest killing, have attacked her home, sending her on the run, and it's up to Caplan to find the girl and determine whether she's the monster everyone suspects. Ramsay has created a fascinating character in Caplan, who wrestles to an uncommon degree with the far-reaching consequences of her actions as an investigator. Brisk pacing and occasional flashes of sly wit ("If Ted Maxwell had been adhering to the librarian dress code, then Karl Rolland had more of an interior designer vibe," Caplan quips about a pair of sources) bolster this solid thriller. *Agent: Maddalena Cavaciuti, David Higham Assoc. (Aug.)*

Date with Evil: A Dales Detective Mystery

Julia Chapman. Pan, $18.99 trade paper (464p) ISBN 978-1-5290-9540-1


THE DALES DETECTIVE SERIES
Date With
EVIL
There's nowt so evil as a wolf in sheep's clothing...
JULIA CHAPMAN

Chapman's sprawling eighth cozy set in the Yorkshire Dales town of Bruncliffe (following 2022's *Date with Betrayal*) finds Delilah Metcalfe, owner of the Dales Dating Agency, swamped with work. While agency boss Samson O'Brien, a former undercover cop and Delilah's sometime-flame, is in London on business, Delilah has remained in Bruncliffe to manage the agency's affairs. Her most pressing cases include an irate housewife whose laundry has been stolen from her washing line, a suspicious fire at a caravan park, a missing real estate agent, produce theft, and "something paranormal" going on at the home of one of the agency's part-time detectives. Things take a turn for the gruesome when—just as Delilah and her crew are beginning to suspect all their cases are connected—somebody winds up dead. Readers will relish the romantic to-ing and fro-ing between Samson and Delilah, but the pacing is exceptionally loose, and Chapman devotes too much space to character exposition. The result is strictly for series devotees. *Agent: Oli Munson, A.M. Heath. (Aug.)*

The Accidental Medium

Tracy Whitwell. Macmillan UK, $27.99 (304p) ISBN 978-1-5290-8751-2

Romance novelist Whitwell (*Love Button*) falters with this disappointing paranormal cozy. Tanz, a 30-something actor whose television career has fizzled, is trying to make a go of it in London. Because of her special ability to "know things," some of Tanz's friends call her a "witch," but she considers herself to be "a normal Geordie lass who's perceptive." She does, however, have occasional visions of her friend Frank, who perished in a car crash three years ago, and she hears the odd voice here and there. Desperate for some regular income, Tanz starts working in a new age store called the Mystery Pot. Her boss, Sheila, explains that the voices Tanz hears mean she's clairaudient, and she begins to tune into them more closely. Soon, she makes contact with spirits that lead her to believe someone's been murdered. Against her better judgment, she investigates. Some of Tanz's off-color narration fails to land (she remarks that models "are transvestites with vaginas and don't come from Earth"), and Whitwell offers very little concrete evidence of Tanz's supposedly impressive powers of deduction. Readers seeking supernatural cozies have a bevy of better options. *(Aug.)*

Deadlock: A Thriller

James Byrne. Minotaur, $28 (368p) ISBN 978-1-250-80578-2

What appears to be a simple kidnapping case becomes a global emergency in Byrne's exhilarating second entry in the Dez Limerick series (after 2022's *The Gatekeeper*). Irish ex-mercenary Limerick hustles to Oregon from California when his friend, Raziah Swann, sends out a personal SOS: her journalist sister, Laleh, has been abducted and beaten by thugs while researching an article on accounting irregularities at Clockjack, a tech conglomerate whose tentacles stretch across entire industries and levels of government. Dez quickly neutralizes the immediate threat, disposing of Laleh's captors with crippling physical force. But when he digs into what caused the seemingly disproportionate attack, he learns that Clockjack plans use its technologies to acquire sensitive intelligence and topple foreign governments—so he infiltrates the company's headquarters outside Portland, using every tool at his disposal to bust up the scheme. Byrne continues to refine Dez into an appealing lead: a loyal friend trained in military assault tactics who would rather use charm than violence to get his way. His breadth of abilities—he's equally adept at computer hacking and plucking his guitar on a nightclub stage—may occasionally strain belief, but he's a good choice for action thriller fans who may have tired of Jack Reacher. This series seems destined for a long run. *(Aug.)*

Ritual of Fire

D.V. Bishop. Macmillan UK, $27.99 (416p) ISBN 978-1-5290-9648-4

Bishop returns to the rich vein of Renaissance Italian history for a limp third mystery featuring soldier-turned-investigator Cesare Aldo and his constable, Carlo Strocchi (following 2020's *The Darkest Sin*). The story begins in May 1538, a few months after the events of the prior entry, with Aldo, an officer of Florence's main criminal court, assigned to the Tuscan countryside. Meanwhile, Strocchi is called to the city's Piazza della Signoria in the dead of night, where he is assailed by the scent of burning flesh. A man has been hung on makeshift gallows, taken down, tied to a cart, and set ablaze; 40 years earlier, the charismatic Dominican friar Girolamo Savonarola met the same fate in the same piazza. During Strocchi's investigation, another man is killed, and Aldo eventually leaves his post to help get to the bottom of both murders, which seem to have religious undertones. Pedestrian prose ("Those craving power believed the end always justified whatever actions were necessary for their desired outcome") and a plodding pace mostly sink this entry. Here's hoping the series regains momentum the next time out. *Agent: Jenny Brown, Jenny Brown Assoc. (Aug.)*

SF/Fantasy/Horror

Mammoths at the Gates

Nghi Vo. Tordotcom, $19.99 (128p) ISBN 978-1-250-85143-7

Hugo Award winner Vo's lovely standalone fourth Singing Hills Cycle fantasy (after *Into the Riverlands*) is the most personal adventure yet for travelling Cleric Chih. It begins with them returning to the Singing Hills abbey, their childhood home and a sacred temple to stories and memory, full of rumors, ghosts, and magical neixin, or memory spirits who never forget. Chih is shocked to discover the abbey's usually bustling halls are nearly deserted, and that their mentor, Cleric Thien, is dead and interred in the manner of all respected clerics. This becomes a problem when two mammoth-riding northern soldiers charge the gates of the abbey, claiming Cleric Thien as their grandfather and demanding the release of his remains. Now Chih must navigate conflict with the riders and their own grief in a home that will never again be what they remember. The worldbuilding isn't the focus, but Vo's mythologically infused alternate Southeast Asia draws readers in just enough to keep their attention and elevate her characters as they move through the plot, which gets off to a slow start but picks up the pace in later chapters. This timeless story of grief and growth is sure to resonate. *(Sept.)*

Godkiller

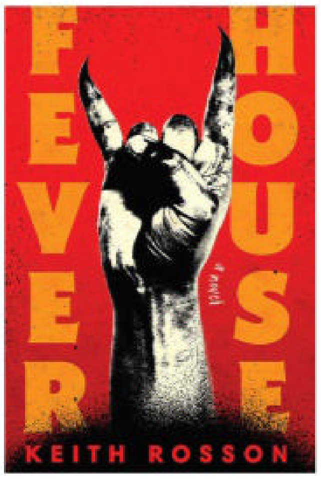
Hannah Kaner. Harper Voyager, $18.99 trade paper (304p) ISBN 978-0-06-334827-1

Kaner thrusts readers into a grisly world of treacherous gods in her enthralling debut and fantasy trilogy launch. After Kissen witnesses a fire god murder her family, her hatred for all deities and thirst for revenge lead to a career as a veiga, or god killer. She has a reputation for being callous, but when Inara Craier, a young, recently orphaned noble girl, seeks Kissen's help in finding a way to nonfatally sever the mystical bond between her and Skediceth, a "squirrel-sized" god of white lies who, unusually for this world, doesn't have a shrine, Kissen reluctantly agrees to help, escorting the duo to Blenraden, the city of shrines. Meanwhile, the king is secretly dying, and his best friend, retired knight Elogast, vows to travel to Blenraden to find a god who will save him. Along the way, he meets Kissen, Inara, and Skediceth, and all warily agree to travel together. The road to Blenraden is perilous, and the unpredictable gods who live there are worse, but the unlikely allies have little choice but to seek the deities' aid. Kaner's bewitching world forms an ideal backdrop to the adventures of her dynamic and appealing cast. This marks Kaner as a writer to watch. *Agent: Ginger Clark, Ginger Clark Literary. (Sept.)*

★ Fever House

Keith Rosson. Random House, $28 (448p) ISBN 978-0-593-59575-6

In this stellar supernatural thriller, Rosson (*Road Seven*) makes suspending disbelief easy by creating plausible, multidimensional characters who just happen to get caught up in the chaos surrounding a dangerous relic. Hutch Holtz and Tim Reed work as debt collectors for loan shark Peach Serrano in Portland, Ore. When Holtz and Reed go to strong-arm Wesley, a drug addict who owes Serrano $12,000, their thoughts are invaded by a powerful negative aura like "an itch in the dark meat of the skull." They trace the sensation to a severed hand that Wesley keeps inside a Wonder Bread bag and decide to take it along to their boss. That choice leads to some unexpected consequences, as proximity to the hand triggers murderous instincts. Rosson ups the suspense by intercutting this story line with transcriptions of an interrogation by a covert U.S. intelligence agency of a being named Michael, who's asked to use his remote-viewing abilities to help locate the hand. Sophisticated characterizations—even brutish Holtz and Reed are imbued with a degree of sympathy—distinguish this page-turner. The result should win Rosson a legion of new fans. *(Aug.)*



The Blue, Beautiful World

Karen Lord. Del Rey, $28 (256p) ISBN 978-0-593-59843-6

Lord returns to the galaxy-spanning sci-fi realm of *The Best of All Possible Worlds* and *The Galaxy Game*, setting this excellent outing on a near-future Earth irrevocably altered by climate change and political turmoil. Young adults from all over the world come together every year in a model global government tasked with finding solutions to real and imagined problems and taking their ideas back to their own countries. This year, the model government's Diplomatic Group, all from formerly colonized countries, are given a hypothetical first contact scenario. Then a video message from a real alien leader is beamed planetwide—and the teens are shocked to recognize it. The beings in the footage they've been analyzing are not actors in costumes; Earth has already been invaded by an alien cartel looking to extract what they can from humanity—and it's up to the young diplomatic team to negotiate with them. Fortunately, they may have a secret weapon on their side: charismatic one-named pop star Owen. Lord's choice to focus on the voices of historically colonized peoples adds depth and compassion to the classic alien invasion trope. Though it can be read as a standalone, series readers will get the most out of this heartfelt and thoughtful, but still action-packed, romp. *(Aug.)*

Jewish Futures

Edited by Michael A. Burstein. Fantastic, $15.99 trade paper (248p) ISBN 978-1-5154-5805-0

Inspired by Jack Dunn's 1974 and 1981

Jewish sci-fi anthologies, Burstein (*I Remember the Future*) brings together 16 appealing stories extrapolating Jewish themes into near- and far-future settings. Opening with "Shema," an agonizing apocalyptic view of a future worldwide pogrom written by high school student Samantha Katz, and closing with Jordan King-Lacroix's bittersweet "The Last Chosen," in which the thousands of years of persecution experienced by Jewish people become achingly personal through one suffering individual, there's plenty of darkness on offer. But there are also welcome points of light: humor and culinary traditions season both Esther Friesner's "Rachel Nussbaum Saves the World" and Randee Dawn's "Matzah Ball Soup for the Vershluggin," while Susan Schwartz's optimistic "Into Thin Heirs" postulates a tentative Israeli-Palestinian peace. Shane Tourtellotte's "The Kuiper Gemara" features an artificial intelligence who asks a rabbi to oversee his conversion to Judaism. These stories open diverse and challenging vistas for sci-fi fans—Jewish and gentile alike. *(Aug.)*

Masters of Death

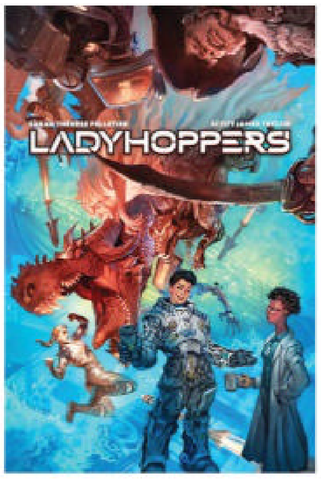
Olivie Blake. Tor, $26.99 (416p) ISBN 978-1-250-89246-1

BookTok sensation Blake (*The Atlas Six*) uses a motley supernatural cast to explore themes of love and sacrifice in an irreverent but occasionally tedious tale narrated by Death itself. (Death, it turns out, is "fantastically verbose, and transcendently literate.") Viola Marek is a realtor (and a vampire) trying to sell a haunted mansion. The only one able to see the specter in question, Viola discovers an unsolved murder and a family curse tying said ghost to the house. To solve the mystery, she'll need help from angels, a grim reaper, demons, a demigod, a siren, and a vampire. Meanwhile, Death mocks them all. The large cast proves an impediment to the plot, with the whodunit taking a while to find its footing as all are introduced. Death's attempts at snarky humor also slow the pace, making the narration clunky and often redundant. Still, the surprisingly somber ending will have readers contemplating the costs of love and the power of facing one's demons. It's not perfect, but Blake's fans and readers looking for a sassy paranormal mystery will find plenty to enjoy. *(Aug.)*

★ Ladyhoppers

Scott James Taylor and Sarah Thérèse Pelletier. Outland Entertainment, $19.95 trade paper (318p) ISBN 978-1-954255-95-1

Pelletier (*In from the Cold*, written as J.T. Rogers) and debut author Taylor collaborate on a sparkling comedy action romp that sends Charlie Chase—a scientist turned genetically enhanced supersoldier from Montreal—on a mission to save the multiverse from tears in the fabric of reality. Charlie stops one such tear from wiping out her home world, but in doing so seals herself in an alternate universe with no way home. She seeks out this universe's version of her boss, Dr. Verity Baum, for assistance. This Verity is Vera, a younger, flightier, more reckless version of the genius scientist Charlie knows. The pair teams up, hopping from universe to universe searching for both a solution to the tears and Charlie's way home. Along the way, they meet alternate versions of their colleagues and must evade both the reality-eating parasites who feed near the tears and the biomechanical hounds chasing them. The authors use the many worlds to play with genre tropes, sending their heroines to one realm of little green aliens and another that the budding friends dub "fantasyland," complete with a dragon. Funny and clever without ever losing a sense of urgency, this page-turning adventure is a winner. *(Aug.)*

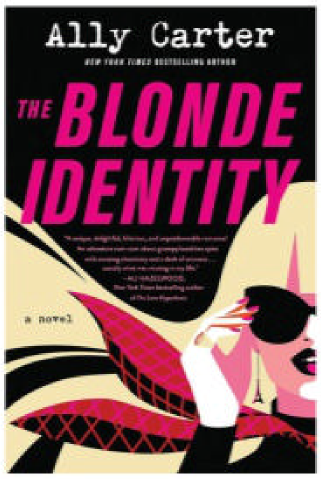


Romance/Erotica

★ The Blonde Identity

Ally Carter. Avon, $30 (384p) ISBN 978-0-06-327664-2

Bestselling YA author Carter (the Gallagher Girls series) serves up an irresistible cocktail of danger and passion in her un-put-downable adult debut. A woman wakes up on an icy Paris sidewalk with no memory of who she is and bad guys closing in. According to her enemies, she's a rogue CIA operative named Alex who stole a critical flash drive from a Russian mobster and now she's on the run for her life. Run she does—right into the arms of sexy spy Jake Sawyer, who rescues her from her myriad pursuers and informs her that she's really Alex's innocent identical twin sister, Zoe. With a Russian gangster and a shady CIA agent hot on their heels, Sawyer and Zoe must jump on and off trains, boats, and bridges to stay alive—and locate the real Alex. Carter ratchets up the danger—and the sexual tension—at every turn, throwing plenty of red herrings across the trail and keeping readers guessing who to trust. Zoe's sense of humor in the face of danger adds levity, and readers will fall hard for gallant Sawyer. Carter also expertly teases a sequel about Alex, whetting appetites for the next installment. This snappy and suspenseful romance fires on all cylinders. *Agent: Kristin Nelson, Nelson Literary. (Aug.)*



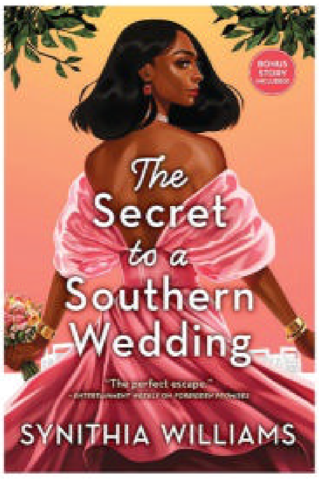
New Adult

Timothy Janovsky. Sourcebooks Casablanca, $16.99 trade paper (352p) ISBN 978-1-72826-426-4

The latest charming rom-com from Jaovsky (*You're a Mean One, Matthew Prince*) adds a mystical twist. Twenty-three-year-old Nolan Baker dreams of becoming a stand-up comedian. At his sister's wedding, funded by Doop, the cultish wellness brand she works for, he gets a call that could be his big break—but only if he abandons the wedding and gets to the comedy club. He chooses his career over family, leaving everyone outraged at him—especially his best friend turned wedding date, Drew Techler, who had just confessed his feelings when Nolan took off. Reeling, Nolan wishes on the crystals in his Doop goody bag to become "successful, happy, and universally loved"—and wakes up the next morning at 30 with no memory of the

★ The Secret to a Southern Wedding

Synithia Williams. Canary Street, $18.99 trade paper (352p) ISBN 978-1-335-43053-3



Williams (the Heart and Soul series) launches her Peachtree Cove series with a pitch-perfect small-town romance focused on forgiveness, second chances, and new beginnings. Successful big-city obstetrician Imani Kemp has no desire to return to Peachtree Cove, Ga., where, as a child, she witnessed her father's mistress shoot her mother, Linda (who survived). In the aftermath, the small-town gossip mill put Imani and Linda, now divorced, through the wringer. Then Linda, who still lives in Peachtree Cove, announces she's getting married in a month to a man she just met, and Imani reluctantly returns home, determined to stop the wedding. She's prepared to face her demons—but she's unprepared for the attraction she feels to her soon-to-be stepbrother, bartender Cyril Dash. Peachtree Cove has been a haven for Cyril and his widowed father, Preston, in the years since Cyril's mother's murder. Cyril has also witnessed firsthand how happy Linda and Preston make each other, so as Imani works to split them up, he works to keep them together. Along the way, their mutual attraction grows into an emotional connection they cannot deny. It's a joy to watch Imani's walls fall down, and readers will swoon over sensitive Cyril. The older couple are equally endearing, and the charm of Peachtree Cove only enhances the proceedings. Readers will eagerly look forward to revisiting this quaint community. *Agent: Tricia Skinner, Fuse Literary. (Aug.)*

intervening years that formed him into a famous albeit mean-spirited comedian. Freaked out, he seeks out Drew, now running a mystery-themed bookstore, who reluctantly agrees to help Nolan get back to his own time. A domineering manager and the looming filming of a Netflix special test Nolan's efforts to make amends—until a family crisis forces him to choose his career or his loved ones once again. Janovsky has as sure a touch with classic romance tropes as ever, and it's a joy to watch his flawed hero grow. Readers will be charmed. *Agent: Keven O'Conner, O'Conner Literary. (Aug.)*

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Skip to the End

Molly James. Forever, $16.99 trade paper (352p) ISBN 978-1-5387-3927-3

James's clever debut puts a magical spin on the hardships of modern dating. Amy Daniels has a strange ability: upon her first kiss with anyone, she has a prophetic vision of how their relationship will end. She's always relied on this gift as a guide in her dating life, but with each vision of future heartbreak, she loses hope she'll ever get a happy ending. She finds comfort in her four supportive high school friends: Charlotte, siblings May and Jay, and Gareth. At Charlotte's wedding, May challenges Amy to search for her soulmate by kissing three men—and for once, she sees a vision of bliss. There's just one problem: she's drunk, and the next day she can't remember exactly who she kissed or which of the three is "the one." Is it Tristan, the sensual millionaire with a dark side? Or Ben, the sexy and empathetic young bartender/aspiring screenwriter? What about the third man, whom Amy can't quite remember? As Amy's friends band together to help her solve the mystery, James captures the giddiness of new love and the comfort of true friendship. This is a delight. *(Aug.)*

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The Referral Program

Shamara Ray. Strebor, $16.99 trade paper (288p) ISBN 978-1-59309-695-3

Ray (*Recipe for Love*) delivers a fun but slightly underdeveloped contemporary that's as focused on female friendship as it is on romance. Thirty-something Dylan is expecting a Christmas proposal from her longtime partner, Ace, when he dumps her instead. Devastated and dreading her reentry into the dating scene, Dylan relies on monthly brunch dates with her (equally single) best friends, Brook and Ivy, to keep her sane. During one such get-together, as they share romantic advice and bottomless mimosas, an idea forms: instead of relying on dating apps, the friends will start a "referral program," taking turns setting each other up with different men in their lives. The ensuing quest for Mr. Right comes replete with comedic mishaps and personal growth as each woman learns about herself in the process. It's a cute premise, but unfortunately the plot moves slowly, and though the dynamic between the women is endearing, romance readers will be disappointed that none of the romantic relationships feel as fleshed out. It's not perfect, but Ray's fans will still want to check this out. *Agent: Sara Camilli, Sara Camilli Agency. (Aug.)*

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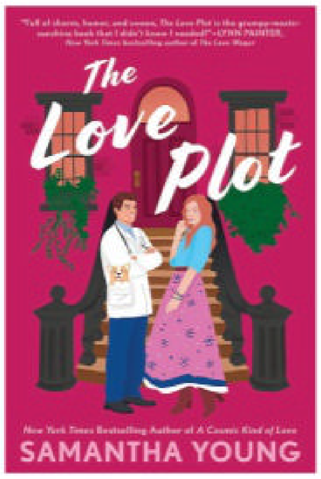
The Love Plot

Samantha Young. Berkley, $17 trade paper (352p) ISBN 978-0-593-43863-3

A straitlaced veterinarian and a carefree kid's party entertainer fall in love while attempting to thwart family matchmaking attempts in this lighthearted rom-com from Young (*A Cosmic Kind of Love*). Raised by hippies, gig worker Star Shine Meadows is a fly-by-the-seat-of-her-pants kind of gal. She makes no long-term commitments in her personal or professional life, unlike Rafe Whitman, the driven, handsome vet she meets while playing a princess at a birthday party. Buttoned-up Rafe is Star's total opposite, but when he offers to pay her a huge amount to play his fake girlfriend and get his domineering mother and sister-in-law to stop setting him up on horrible dates, she agrees. Soon, fake dating turns into real love, and Rafe's acceptance of Star's quirks persuades the commitment-phobe to give a relationship a shot. Problems arise when Rafe's wealthy family object to Star's lifestyle (unbeknownst to Rafe) and she makes changes

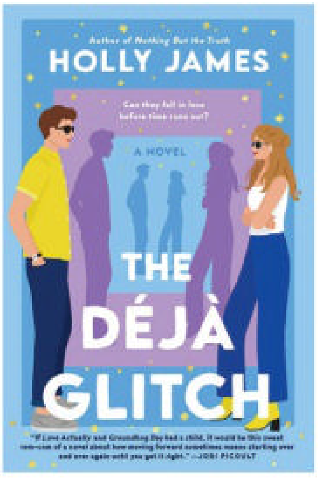


to appease them, confusing Rafe and driving a wedge between her and her friends. Will the desires of others destroy what Star and Rafe could have? Young's take on the fake dating trope is sexy and charmingly unpretentious. It's sure to leave readers smiling. *Agent: Lauren Abramo, Dystel, Goderich & Bourret. (Aug.)*

The Déjà Glitch

Holly James. Dutton, $17 trade paper (336p) ISBN 978-0-593-47158-6

With this cleverly constructed romance, James (*Nothing but the Truth*) puts a fresh spin on the concept of a time loop. The night after a handsome stranger kisses Gemma Peters at her best friend's birthday party, Gemma wakes up to suspect that she's reliving the previous day. She dismisses the feeling as déjà vu—until she collides with the same handsome stranger at a coffee shop, triggering even more flashes of memory. He introduces himself as Jack and claims the two of them have been trapped in a day-long time loop for a while. Though he remembers every iteration, this is the first time Gemma's recalled anything about the previous go-rounds. He also has a theory about how they can break free: they must fall in love by the end of the day. Despite Gemma's incredulity, she develops feelings for Jack as their paths keep crossing and he proves to understand her on a deep level. Meanwhile, she's challenged to break out of her routine, let go of assumptions about her life, and even confront her estranged father. The focus is more on Gemma's personal growth than the budding relationship, but Jack and Gemma still make a satisfying couple. This is a cute romp. *Agent: Melissa Edwards, Stonesong. (Aug.)*



The Art of Love and Lies

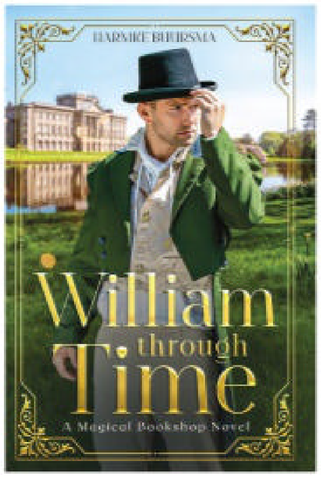
Rebecca Anderson. Shadow Mountain, $16.99 trade paper (288p) ISBN 978-1-63993-108-8

A talented artist and a very proper police inspector team up in the appealing latest Victorian romance from Anderson (*Isabelle and Alexander*). In 1857 Manchester, England, artist Rosanna Hawkins, a young woman ahead of her time, earns a decent living painting reproductions of fine art for Manchester's elite. Her latest project is reproducing *The Manchester Madonna*, an unfinished painting by Michelangelo, the original of which graces the walls of the city's Art Treasures Exhibition. Inspector Martin Harrison, who's in charge of the exhibit's security, quickly becomes enthralled with Rosanna and asks her to attend the exhibition with him on the day of Queen Victoria's visit. Problems arise, however, when that morning Martin discovers that someone has broken into the exhibition hall and replaced many priceless artworks with Rosanna's replicas. Though Martin initially believes her to be involved in the thefts—and even has her arrested—Rosanna's able to convince him of her innocence, offering to work with him to apprehend the true thief. The ensuing romantic escapades of this unlikely duo will keep readers eagerly turning pages. It's a chaste yet undeniably alluring romance. (Aug.)

William Through Time

Harmke Buursma. Illusive, $27.99 (304p) ISBN 978-1-73740-335-7

In Buursma's diverting second Magical Bookshop romance (after *Rose Through Time*), a time traveler helps a queer war veteran deal with his past. In 1815, William Chambers returns to England from the Napoleonic Wars both physically and emotionally scarred after the death of his lover, fellow soldier James. He receives a cryptic letter from his best friend, John Easton, asking William to travel to his country estate. John and his wife from the future, Rose, explain that they have found another time traveler, Austin Miller, who needs assistance finding his way back to his present. William agrees to help, burying his attraction to Austin despite encouraging hints as Austin slowly opens up about his painful childhood. After a hunting trip triggers William's PTSD, Austin convinces William to visit James's father for some closure. As William and Austin draw closer, however, William's odious former military commander arrives and attempts to blackmail William over his sexuality. There's plenty of drama and intrigue afoot, though the time-travel element feels minimized; and since the story is told entirely from William's perspective, it's hard to know exactly how Austin feels about navigating the Regency world. Buursma makes good use of Regency social conventions, however, to raise the stakes on the men's forbidden love. Fans of queer period romances will find much to enjoy. *(Self-published)*

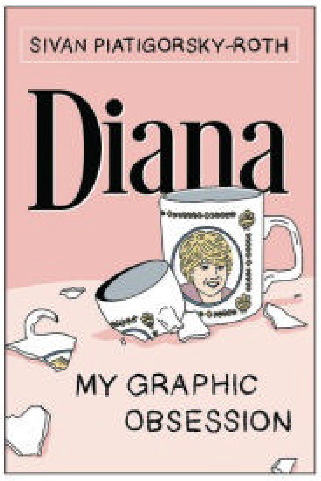


Comics

Diana: My Graphic Obsession

Sivan Piatigorsky-Roth. Street Noise, $19.99 trade paper (148p) ISBN 978-1-95149-122-2

In this unorthodox survey of the Princess of Wales's life and legacy, comics newcomer Piatigorsky-Roth finds parallels between their own navigation of gender as a trans person and Diana's fraught relationship with celebrity and the monarchy. The image of a commemorative mug from the 1981 royal wedding precipitates an abridged account of Diana's "very public journey of self-realization," with the admittedly obsessed Piatigorsky-Roth teasing out the significance of their fixation on the princess. Noting that they thought of Diana "every day" while working as a preschool teacher (a "woman's job"), Piatigorsky-Roth juxtaposes drawings of the princess from her own time as a nursery school educator against images of the artist injecting hormones. The royal wedding in particular is scrutinized as a performative conversion of Diana from girl to woman—and to wife, princess, and "England's Rose," with comparisons to classical mythology (including the virgin goddess Diana). The comics medium proves apt for the book's twinning of celebrity biography and personal essay—recreating photographic images



of Diana in deliberately unembellished ink, Piatigorsky-Roth foregrounds interiority over mystique and conveys the complexity of their obsession (“Sometimes I worry that I don’t like to talk about Diana because I think she’s mine”). Idiosyncratic and intimate, this heartfelt tribute doubles as a revealing self-portrait. *Agent: Christopher Schelling, Selectric Artists. (June.)*

Big Ugly

Ellice Weaver. Avery Hill, $19.95 hardback (128p) ISBN 978-1-91039-566-0

A brother and sister move back in together and navigate their complicated relationship through various health, work, and family upsets in Weaver’s atmospheric if elliptical graphic novel debut. Mel has recently been through a difficult break up and struggles to get doctors to take her mysterious physical ailments seriously. She lets younger brother Matt, who has been estranged from their father for three years, move in with her and supports him financially—but not necessarily emotionally—as he pieces his life together after his own romantic setback. Though details of the siblings’ early life are slim, their father is described by his children as a “divide and conquer mastermind.” The plot, such as it is, circles around their ambivalence toward supporting each other as they strive to find their way individually and through family ties. Mel and Matt are drawn as zaftig, Matisse-style figures in scenes that turn grocery store expeditions and car trips into beautiful, bright tapestries. Both the narrative and the visuals evoke Brecht Evans–meets–Eleanor Davis. “Why do you always make me be like this?” Matt says after a sudden outburst aimed at his sister. It’s a line that will ring familiar to anyone who has returned to a knotty family fold. This melancholic, slice-of-life tale reveals the way childhood dynamics reverberate well into adulthood. *(June)*

84,000,000
Annual Web Ad Impressions

32,000,000
Annual Web Page Views

14,500,000
Annual Opened Emails

14,000,000
Annual Unique Visitors

1,150,000
Social Followers

1,000,000
Print Copies

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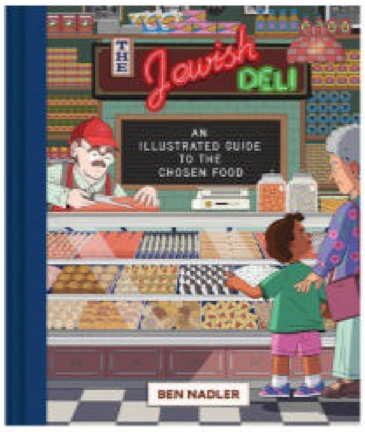
PUBLISHERS WEEKLY

The Jewish Deli: An Illustrated Guide to the Chosen Food

Ben Nadler. Chronicle, $24.95 (248p) ISBN 978-1-797-20524-3

Nadler (*Heretics!*) lays out a humorous and informative graphic history of the Jewish deli in North America. With sections that include meat, fish, bagels, schmear, and dessert, the primer is populated by talking sandwiches and humans drawn digitally with triangular noses, boneless arms, and a variety of historical dress. Deli food was born from scarcity, according to Nadler; brisket became the cut of choice because it was cheap, and the brining process lessened its toughness. This is also a story of immigration, fusion, and evolution. If traditionalists find modern dishes like matzo ramen abhorrent, Aaron Israel, who runs Shalom Japan with his wife, points out that adaptation is the ultimate Jewish m.o.: “People who didn’t necessarily have a home base, who lived in various places and adapted to the local culture, brought in a lot of the local traditions and made it work with dietary laws—that’s always been the history of Jewish food.” Sprinkled throughout are portraits of famous delicatessens (Katz’s and Russ & Daughters in N.Y.C.; Canter’s in L.A.) and interviews with the passionate counterfolks who operate them. This will satisfy both the culturally and the culinarily curious. *(June)*



LSBN

Emma Jayne. Silver Sprocket, $14.99 (80p) ISBN 979-8-886200-21-8

Ignatz winner Jayne (*Trans Girls Hit the Town*) and colorist Sloane Leong (*A Map to the Sun*) team up for a fast-paced sapphic space adventure rom-com. Commander Sugimoto and her chief engineer Mischa Polyakov have toiled for years in a military task force called LSBN (Land-Based Subterranean Beast Neutralizer). The team has been constructing a huge female robot fighter called Unit Saffron, intended to combat a race of giant monsters called Colossi that have been terrorizing Earth. But plans change when a mutual peace is suddenly negotiated between Earth and the Colossi, threatening the shutdown of LSBN altogether. (Sugimoto asks disgustedly, “How does a thirty-story-tall monster sign a peace treaty anyway?”) After Sugimoto and Polyakov, realizing they’ll no longer be working together, confess their mutual attraction, things heat up rapidly—though with some bumps in the road. Eventually, the two women take Unit Saffron out for what will be her first and only jaunt, a scene that offers some nifty explosions before evolving into a hot and heavy tryst. Jayne’s sly sense of humor pairs well with her imaginatively rendered sci-fi hardware and Leong’s bold palette. It’s a slim but spicy read that’s sure to tickle the fancy of queer sci-fi and romance fans. *(June)*

Nonfiction

Betty Friedan: Magnificent Disrupter

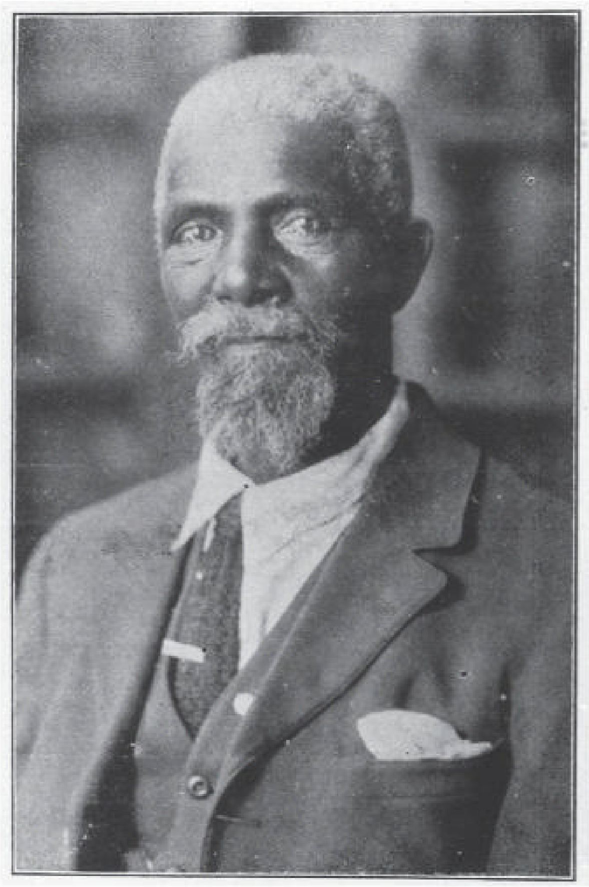
Rachel Shteir. Yale Univ., $27 (384p) ISBN 978-0-300-22002-5

Historian Shteir (*The Steal*) highlights Betty Friedan's complex legacy as a tireless and mercurial crusader for feminism in this warts-and-all biography. In 1963, Friedan channeled her unhappy experiences as a daughter and wife into *The Feminine Mystique*, in which she described the "numbing gendered division of labor at home." The book's success helped transform Friedan from a left-wing print journalist into a popular—if controversial—speaker and a cofounder of the National Organization for Women. At the second NOW Congress in 1969, Friedan clashed with lesbian activists, calling them the "lavender menace" and attempting to distance NOW from their cause. Delving into Friedan's reasoning, Shteir concludes that a combination of Midwestern prudishness, paranoia (Friedan "contended that the lesbians were CIA plants"), and left-leaning economic theories convinced her that material gains like wage equality, free abortion, and free childcare were paramount for women's liberation, while "sexual politics" spearheaded by lesbian intellectuals like Kate Millet were a dangerous distraction. Shteir's comprehensive research includes interviews with Millett and other second-wave feminists, and illuminating deep dives into archives recently made public. The result is a lucid portrait of Friedan as a bold yet flawed advocate for women's equality. *(Sept.)*

We Survived the End of the World: Lessons from Native America on Apocalypse and Hope

Steven Charleston. Broadleaf, $26.99 (208p) ISBN 978-1-506-48667-3

In this perplexing hybrid of self-help and Native American history, Charleston (*Ladder to the Light*), a retired Episcopal bishop and citizen of the Choctaw Nation, responds to climate change, Covid-19, and other global crises by invoking the wisdom of Indigenous leaders whose communities struggled against white settlement. Drawing on the experiences of Ganiodaiio, a Seneca warrior and diplomat, who was known to white Americans as Cornplanter, Charleston urges readers to embrace individual accountability while simultaneously working for the common good. Following the ideas of Tenskwatawa, the "Shawnee Prophet," he calls on readers to build communities based on mutual respect. The example of Nez Perce shaman Smohalla emphasizes the importance of treating the environment as a living being rather than a resource for humans, while that of the Paiute Ghost Dancer Wovoka urges people to overcome fear and hatred of their opponents and strive for reconciliation. Unfortunately, Charleston doesn't offer specifics about how one might transform these sensible attitudes into strategies for individual and communal activism, and his historical research often comes up short, as when he describes early 19th-century Native Americans as having "a very libertarian existence." Readers will be disappointed. *(Sept.)*



PERMISSION OF HISTORY NEBRASKA, RG2973, PH02–02, 10412

Nebraska homesteader Robert Anderson ca. 1920, as seen in The First Migrants *(reviewed on p. 85).*

Scattershot: Music, Life, Elton, and Me

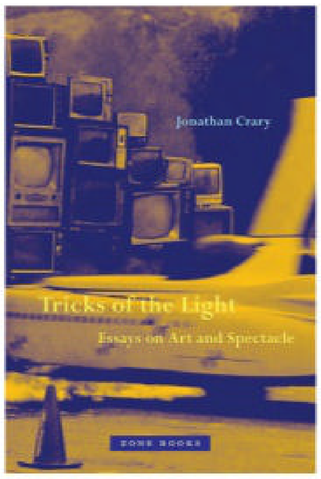
Bernie Taupin. Hachette, $30 (384p) ISBN 978-0-3068-2867-6

Lyricist Taupin, best known for his long-standing collaboration with Elton John, bounces jauntily from anecdote to anecdote in his whirlwind debut memoir. Taupin was born in Lincolnshire, England, where he "learned nothing in school. My education came through my mother, her father, and in the grooves of vinyl albums." At 17, he met Reg Dwight (who would soon change his name to Elton John) and shared the "fanciful" and "whimsical" songs he'd written. When John asked if he had more, the now-famous partnership was born. Taupin provides intimate glimpses into the genesis of some of his and John's most well-known hits: he wrote "Your Song" in 10 minutes as John's mother cooked breakfast, while "Mona Lisas and Mad Hatters" was inspired by his first night in New York City. Taupin wends his way through his artistic influences, several marriages, and drug use, but the clear highlights are the reflections about his craft—he sometimes wonders if he's "just a messenger, delivering whimsical propositions," adding that "what I became was, and always has been, an enigma to me." Despite a tendency to ramble, Taupin's candor and imagistic writing ("a cubicle the color of sick") hold the reader's attention. It's an appealing complement to Elton John's 2019 memoir *Me*. *(Sept.)*

Tricks of the Light: Essays on Art and Spectacle

Jonathan Crary. Zone, $32 (272p) ISBN 978-1-942-13085-7

In this erudite collection of previously published essays, art historian Crary (*Scorched Earth*) examines 20th-century visual art (including performance, photography, television, and film) and how it negotiates perception and attention. He takes a microscope to Gretchen Bender's 1987 video installation *Total Recall*, in which "delirium, [and] sensory overload" upend "our familiar, domestic relationship to the TV screen" and "intensif[y] our physiocognitive involvement to a threshold at which it becomes acute," and contends that in Marcel Duchamp's 1912 painting *The Passage from Virgin to Bride*, "the audience becomes a key agent [of] creation" due to the work's sense of openness, which creates "an active field of potentially unlimited relationships" that "resist being inserted into a structural logic." Linking these essays is the



idea of attention: how "the emergence of a social, urban, psychic, industrial field increasingly saturated with sensory input" in the 19th century complicated the ability to focus even as new systems of consumerism demanded it, and how visual culture can challenge spectators to look more intently and with all their senses. Students of 20th-century art and media will appreciate Crary's fine-grained analysis and prescient cultural insights, including how television can "produce, rather than represent, a world of experience" that "becomes more real than so-called everyday life." This is edifying. *(Sept.)*

The First Migrants: How Black Homesteaders' Quest for Land and Freedom Heralded America's Great Migration

Richard Edwards and Jacob Friefeld. Bison, $36.95 (456p) ISBN 978-1-496-23084-3

Economist Edwards and historian Friefeld (coauthors of *Homesteading the Plains*) deliver a meticulously researched account of Black homesteading on the Great Plains in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, framing these early migrants as a precursor of the Great Migration. While the authors spotlight all-Black homesteader communities like Nicodemus, Kans., they mainly focus on homesteaders who lived on remote farms, highlighting the financial risk involved and the emotional turmoil caused by such isolation. Henry Burden, formerly enslaved in Virginia, claimed a tract of land in Saline County, Neb., in 1870; facing calamities like fire and locusts, he struggled to make ends meet. On the other hand, Robert Anderson, born into slavery in Kentucky, made enough money on the tract he acquired in 1891 in Box Butte County, Neb., that he could afford to travel abroad. Agricultural scientist George Washington Carver was raised by his white Missouri enslavers as though he were their own child; in his 20s, he homesteaded alone

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[Q&A]

PW Talks with Eddie Ndopu

Living Dangerously

In *Sipping Dom Pérignon Through a Straw* (Legacy Lit, Aug.; reviewed on p. 83), Ndopu, who was born with spinal muscular atrophy, recalls attending Oxford University as a wheelchair-bound graduate student.

How did you settle on a time frame for this memoir?

The fairy-tale ending would have been me getting into Oxford. I wanted to start the day after the fairy tale, what happens after you've achieved your wildest dreams. I think the reality is that the more barriers disabled people tear down, the more barriers are on the other side, and I wanted to be honest about how my accomplishments have not inoculated me against that. Oxford was a snapshot that included everything I wanted to say.

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In the book, you advocate for "living dangerously." Can you expand on what you mean by that, and how it's shaped the way you live?

I think dangerous living is really self-advocacy, even at the risk of being labeled unreasonable or entitled. Either I live the life I really want to live, or I live a life that is "easier." I actually think it's the harder life; it comes at the expense of authenticity. I don't judge any disabled person who chooses not to live dangerously, though. The onus should never be on disabled people. The onus should be on society and the systemic inequalities we navigate every day.

What was the easiest part of this book to write? The most difficult?

The hardest parts dealt with my own acquiescence to mistreatment. How, in some ways, I was actively participating in my own struggle, because that's what we do sometimes to get along. I have this reputation for being a fierce and determined advocate, but behind closed doors, I began to question whether this life is worth it. The easy parts were about the advocates I've met along the way. I take great pleasure in being able to tell people how I feel about them.

Where did the title come from?

I think "sipping Dom Pérignon through a straw" perfectly encapsulates resisting ableism and wanting a larger, more extraordinary life. I'm not just interested in access to the building using a ramp. I've come for the whole building, and I think the title articulates the kind of freedom I'm looking for.

What do you hope people will take away from your story?

What I really hope people understand is that ableism includes all of us, whether you have a disability or not. Ableism doesn't just dehumanize disabled people—it strips nondisabled people of their own humanity, because it is about dictating a very narrow conception of what it means to be a productive, valuable human being. I hope people don't just categorize this as a disability memoir. It's a memoir about liberation, about asking us to reimagine our institutions so they validate all of us, no matter who we are or where we come from. —Julie Naughton in Beeler, Kans., where he developed a profound sense of loneliness that stayed with him long after he abandoned the homesteading life. Utilizing a wealth of primary sources and accounts from descendants, the authors make palpable their subjects' relentless drive toward freedom through self-reliance. It's a revealing look at an underrepresented chapter in American history. Photos. *(Aug.)*

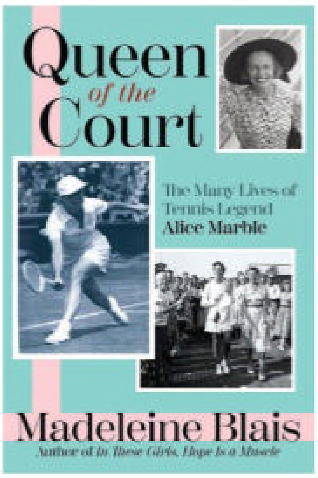
Beijing Rules: How China Weaponized Its Economy to Confront the World

Bethany Allen. Harper, $32.99 (336p) ISBN 978-0-063-05741-8

China uses its enormous market and financial clout to coerce foreign countries and companies into complying with its geopolitical agenda, according to this savvy debut. Allen, the China correspondent for *Axios*, surveys the Chinese government's "authoritarian economic statecraft" during the Covid-19 pandemic: exploiting the world's distraction to impose authoritarian rule on Hong Kong; demanding that Zoom, whose research-and-development operation is in China, shut down meetings involving Chinese pro-democracy dissidents; using face-mask exports to strong-arm foreign governments into praising China; and other international pressure campaigns. She sets all this amid a critique of the Western neoliberal belief that capitalism will automatically nudge China toward liberal democracy. Without countervailing incentives from their own governments, she argues, Western corporations acquiesce to Beijing's dictates, lobby for pro-Chinese policies, and censor criticism of the Chinese government on media platforms. Allen's elegantly written investigation blends economic history with vivid reporting on such players as Chinese spy Christine Fang, who allegedly spread Beijing's influence by seducing California congressman Eric Swalwell and other politicians. Less cogent is her reform program, a grab bag of vague proposals including international trade regulations, diversification of supply chains, and using "algorithms to prioritize fair and fact-based content." Still, it's a startling and timely panorama of Chinese economic subversion. *(Aug.)*

★ Queen of the Court: The Many Lives of Tennis Legend Alice Marble

Madeleine Blais. Atlantic Monthly, $30 (432p) ISBN 978-0-8021-2832-4



Blais (*To the New Owners*), a journalism professor at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, serves up an enthralling biography of pioneering tennis player Alice Marble (1913–1990). Born in rural Beckwourth, Calif., and raised in San Francisco, Marble took up tennis in high school and quickly mastered the sport. Blais offers a detailed overview of Marble's career—from winning junior tournaments to nabbing singles and doubles titles at both Wimbledon and the U.S. Open in 1939 to going pro in 1941—but the narrative is equally exciting when describing Marble's endeavors off the court, which included overseeing a line of comics about notable historical women and pursuing a singing career. More consequentially, she spoke out in 1950 to support ending racial segregation in tennis so that phenom Althea Gibson would be permitted to compete in the U.S. Open. Blais's handling of Marble's spurious claim to have served as a spy during WWII showcases the author's dogged research and empathetic analysis, pointing out travel records that contradict Marble's story and suggesting that it may have stemmed from the former champion's yearning to hold the public's attention as her star power declined. This will likely stand as the definitive account of Marble's life. *(Aug.)*

Dark Days: Fugitive Essays

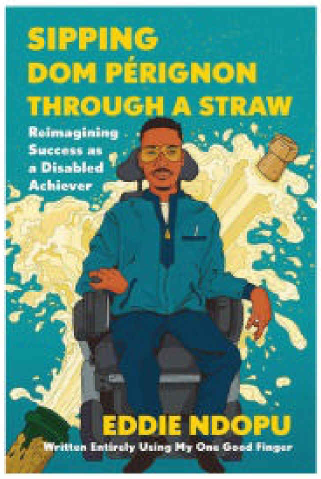
Roger Reeves. Graywolf, $26 (240p) ISBN 978-1-64445-241-7

Poet Reeves (*Best Barbarian*) interweaves autobiography and American history in his strong nonfiction debut. The elliptical opener, "Our Angel of History," describes a photograph of a Black boy watching a Barack Obama rally in 2008 and uses the boy's "stoic" expression as a metaphor for the necessity of having a clear-eyed understanding of the ensuing decade's racial strife. In "Reading Fire, Reading the Stars," Reeves suggests that interpreting "texts," broadly, has been an integral part of Black American life, citing both runaway enslaved people who "read" the stars as they made their way north and his own childhood Bible study, which gave him the interpretive tools to become a cultural critic. One of the most poignant selections is "Letters to Michael Brown," in which Reeves addresses a series of dispatches to the slain teenager—who was killed by a Ferguson, Mo., police officer in 2014—explaining that Reeves's seven-year-old child "fears being shot when she hears sirens." Other entries touch on hush harbors (clandestine church services enslaved people held in the woods), the death of actor Michael K. Williams, and the fiction of Zora Neale Hurston and Richard Wright. Reeves's trademark lyricism ("The pit of the peach swaddled by its flesh, becoming whole there on the limb of the day") shines throughout, proving that he's just as affecting in prose as in verse. This impresses. *(Aug.)*

★ Sipping Dom Pérignon Through a Straw

Eddie Ndopu. Legacy Lit, $29 (240p) ISBN 978-0-306-82906-2

In this sharp and illuminating debut memoir, South African disability rights advocate Ndopu chronicles his trials and triumphs as a disabled gay Black man enrolled at Oxford University. Diagnosed with spinal muscular atrophy, which weakens the body's skeletal muscles, at age two, and not expected to live beyond age five, Ndopu defied all medical models. After graduating from college, he was accepted into the Master's in Public


SIPPING DOM PÉRIGNON THROUGH A STRAW
Reimagining Success as a Disabled Achiever
EDDIE NDOPU
Written Entirely Using My One Good Finger

Policy program at Oxford. Initially elated, Ndopu quickly settled into something more like optimistic ambivalence after he arrived at the university. Though he felt proud of receiving recognition from such a prestigious institution, he was an outsider among his able-bodied peers, dealing with a rotating cast of care aides and lamenting the school's lack of accommodations for people with disabilities. Wryly detailing the costs and complications of his attendance at Oxford, Ndopu shines a light on ableism both conscious and unconscious ("Within a span of half a day, I'd been shuttled between care aides like a young person who'd fallen through the cracks of the foster care system, and now I was being prevented from using the bathroom," he laments early on). This raw yet triumphant tale should be required reading. *Agent: Bridget Matzie, Aevitas Creative Management. (Aug.)*

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A Brief History of the Female Body: An Evolutionary Look at How and Why the Female Form Came to Be

Deena Emera. Sourcebooks, $18.99 trade paper (400p) ISBN 978-1-72827-515-4

Biologist Emera's enlightening debut traces the evolutionary history of women's bodies. Mammary glands, Emera explains, likely developed from sweat glands in humans' amphibian-like distant ancestors more than 350 million years ago. Nipples formed later, providing offspring with a more sanitary alternative to licking milk droplets mothers "sweat out" on their skin, where the milk would have risked spoiling and mingled with bacteria. Exploring the science of why women menstruate, Emera suggests it's likely a form of "quality control… screening for the best eggs, sperm, and embryos." Another theory illuminates how the interests of a mother and child sometimes conflict: the endometrium that builds up in the uterus during the menstrual cycle is possibly a precaution to make it harder for a yet-to-be-formed embryo to sap more nutrients from its mother than she can afford to lose. Emera also discusses research into the mechanics of mate selection, including one study in which women reported finding the scents of men who were genetically dissimilar from them more attractive than the scents of men who were more similar. Thought-provoking and accessibly written, this is a conversation starter. *(Aug.)*

* * *

Gonzo Capitalism: How to Make Money in an Economy That Hates You

Chris Guillebeau. Little, Brown Spark, $29 (256p) ISBN 978-0-316-49127-3

In this provocative program, *Side Hustle School* podcaster Guillebeau (*The $100 Startup*) explores outside-the-box methods for earning money. The financial security enjoyed by baby boomers "is a thing of the past," Guillebeau contends, and getting ahead now requires such creative strategies as competing in "play-to-earn" video games and remotely working two full-time jobs during the same hours. He spotlights individuals who have embraced such niche schemes and provides guidance on how readers can follow their lead. For example, Kat Norton, known as "Miss Excel," makes tens of thousands of dollars per year posting TikToks that feature Microsoft Excel tips and direct viewers to sign up for her paid Excel courses. Readers might emulate her by finding a fresh twist on an existing social media niche with real-world applications, such as how to care for houseplants. Guillebeau also profiles an Australian man who built a successful business selling merchandise featuring AI art, and offers tips on how to set up an online shop, recommending readers use the merchant platform Shopify to sell products and create an Instagram account to promote the art. The creative suggestions are a dramatic and somewhat refreshing departure from typical personal finance fare, but there's considerable risk involved in some of the ventures (Guillebeau notes that prediction-market betting on such matters as the outcome of political elections operates in a legal gray area). Readers will want to approach this with caution. *(Aug.)*

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Higher Sobriety: My Years Without Booze

Jill Stark. Scribe US, $22 trade paper (368p) ISBN 978-1-957363-39-4

Journalist Stark (*Happy Never After*) chronicles a year of sobriety in her witty memoir. She shares how she started binge drinking as a teenager in Scotland and continued after moving to Australia, where she reported on the "nation's drinking habits" for *The Age* while maintaining a hard-partying lifestyle. At age 35, a grueling New Year's Day hangover convinced her to quit alcohol for a year. Her health rebounded even as she discovered that staying on the wagon complicated her social and dating life, as when her friend declined to accompany her to a rooftop bar, saying, "I just don't like the idea of being out of control when you're in control." Stark also feared that going on dates sober would be "dispassionate" before she came to appreciate the greater clarity she gained from viewing potential partners "without my beer goggles." Though she began drinking in moderation after her year of sobriety ended, she eventually returned to complete abstinence, finding that "it's easier than moderation." Despite a slew of clichés, the humor lands ("Teetotalism is a crime punishable by death" in her native Scotland), and Stark's candid reflections reveal the outsize role booze plays in many people's social lives. It's a spirited tale of kicking addiction. *(Aug.)*

* * *

Fearfully and Wonderfully Made: The Astonishing New Science of the Senses

Maureen Seaberg. St. Martin's, $30 (272p) ISBN 978-1-250-27241-6

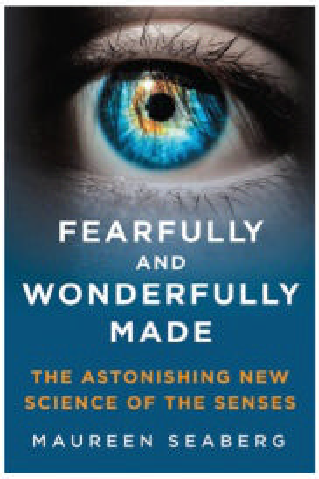
Human senses are "far more powerful than we know," according to this uneven study. *Psychology Today* columnist Seaberg (*Tasting the Universe*) highlights research on hearing, sight, smell, taste, and touch that is changing the scientific understanding of perception. Humans, she argues, have a stronger sense of sight and smell than scientists once thought, citing studies that found humans outperform dogs in detecting certain scents and can see even a single photon of light. Seaberg also profiles individuals with keen sensory abilities, including retired nurse Joy Milne, whose ability to detect Parkinson's

★ Underground Empire: How America Weaponized the World's Economy

Henry Farrell and Abraham Newman. Holt, $28.99 (288p) ISBN 978-1-250-84055-4

HOW AMERICA WEAPONIZED
THE WORLD ECONOMY
UNDER
GROUND
EMPIRE
HENRY
FARRELL
ABRAHAM
NEWMAN

Control over information, money, and technology gives America overweening global influence, according to this penetrating exposé. Political scientists Farrell (*The Uses and Abuses of Weaponized Trust*) and Newman (*Protectors of Privacy*) reveal how the U.S. exploits the international infrastructures used to make cellphone calls or wire funds to bully foreign countries and private companies. These infrastructures include fiber-optic cables carrying the world's internet traffic, most of which physically crosses U.S. territory and is available for perusal by the National Security Agency; the international bank payments system SWIFT, which divulges information about global economic transactions to the U.S.; and American sanctions regulations that deprive the nation's adversaries of markets and technology, as in 2022 when the U.S. forced the Taiwanese semiconductor manufacturer TSMC to deny advanced chips to the Chinese telecom giant Huawei, thus forestalling a Chinese-built global empire of 5G internet networks. Writing in lucid, accessible prose, the authors trace the growth of America's economic weapons and their modern deployments, which are sometimes subtle and devious and sometimes blunt and piratical. (In 2019, a State Department official threatened a sea captain piloting a tanker full of Iranian oil with personal sanctions if he didn't change course.) The result is a fascinating and troubling look at the power plays enabled by a networked world. *(Sept.)*



disease by smell led to the development of an early diagnostic test, and sommelier Marzi Pecen, a "supertaster" who likely has twice as many taste buds as the average person. The science of how the senses function intrigues (taste is the result of chemicals in food changing proteins in the walls of taste buds' sensory cells, which send messages that nerve cells pass on to the brain), but Seaberg undermines her credibility by taking seriously people who claim to be able to sense "a location on the other side of the world" or "an event that happened long ago." Readers would be better off with Ashley Ward's *Where We Meet the World*. *(Aug.)*

* * *

Soul Archaeology: A (Totally Doable) Approach to Creating a Self-Loving and Liberated Life

Sarah Sapora. Balance, $18.99 trade paper (320p) ISBN 978-1-538-72574-0

Debut author Sapora, who describes herself as a "self-love mentor," encourages readers to work toward "the most authentic and empowered version" of themselves in this rousing ode to personal growth. Laying out her "soul archaeology" program, through which readers can "excavate" their inner depths, Sapora claims that "instead of old bones or relics, [you] will uncover valuable pieces of yourself." First, one must sift through the "dirt" of unexamined feelings, thoughts, memories, and entrenched behaviors, investigating how one's sense of self has been formed. (Among other questions, readers might ask themselves: "Who do I think I have to be to be loved by others?") Later in the process, seekers can draw up a "Self-Love To-Do List," a road map of concrete daily strategies that "work the muscle of our self-love" by chipping away at barriers to "the way you want to feel" (one task might be to "speak up with my opinions in conversations with other people"). The goal, according to Sapora, isn't perfection, as "the real magic comes from the adjusting, negotiating, and listening to yourself that come naturally when you are doing something different." That inspiring work-in-progress ethos animates the whole book, whether the author is discussing her evolving relationship with body image or reassuring readers that their authentic self is "not actually perfect, but messy and beautiful at the same time." Sapora's soul-searching tips and relentless cheerleading make for a winning take on self-compassion. *(Aug.)*

* * *

Why We Need to Be Wild: One Woman's Quest for Ancient Human Answers to 21st Century Problems

Jessica Carew Kraft. Sourcebooks, $27.99 (336p) ISBN 978-1-728-27659-5

Journalist Kraft's revealing debut chronicles her evolution from urbanite working mom to foraging woodswoman. After her mother died from multiple sclerosis complications, which Kraft attributed partly to a sedentary, nutritionally insufficient Western lifestyle, the author began to consider the ill effects of modern life and concluded that "we are shackled to fast food, cheap oil, and chronic debt, while our social worlds have collapsed… to the tiniest handheld screen." Kraft was inspired to learn about a "Paleolithic" lifestyle and began attending gatherings to learn such "ancestral skills" as hide tanning and basket weaving. Later, she toured the country meeting members of the "rewilding" movement (which calls for adherents to "move, work, sleep, socialize, sleep, socialize, raise families, and produce goods the way the early hunter-gatherers did"). The author currently lives in the Sierra Foothills, and while she retains some modern "comforts" (living in a single family home, getting basic goods from strangers), she ultimately realized that "the more I unleash myself from the tethers of domestication, the happier I feel." Kraft candidly discusses the movement's flaws—including its lack of diversity—while offering informative insights into its ecological and social benefits. Readers who've questioned the pitfalls of tech-based living will be intrigued. *(Aug.)*

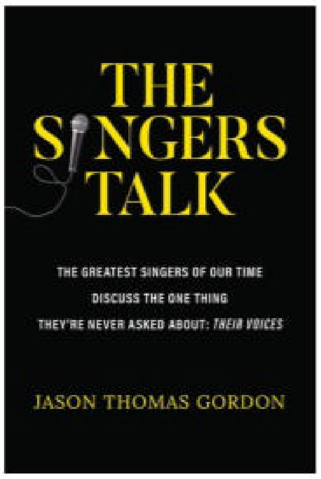
In the Company of Radical Women Writers

Rosemary Hennessey. Univ. of Minnesota, $24.95 trade paper (304p) ISBN 978-1-5179-1490-5

This dense study from Hennessey (*Profit and Pleasure*), an English professor at Rice University, examines the work of seven women communists whose writings tackled issues of social justice and labor during the Great Depression. She contends that the politics of Alice Childress, Marvel Cooke, Josephine Herbst, Claudia Jones, Louise Thompson Patterson, Muriel Rukeyser, and Meridel Le Sueur challenged the "disparity between the promise of democracy and the inequalities people lived under" by taking "a feminist approach to class, race, and gender." Contending that her subjects were ahead of their time, Hennessey notes that journalists Cooke and Jones's 1935 coverage of a unionization drive by domestic Black women workers in Harlem exposed how they labored under threat of sexual assault and how whiteness was "reproduced through a Black woman's performance of her subordinate place." Women's bodily autonomy is another through line in the writers' work, as in Le Sueur's 1934 novel *The Girl*, which follows unmarried women living in an abandoned warehouse, some of whom "abort pregnancies [while] others resist forced sterilization." The discussions of social reproduction, dialectical sensibility, and other Marxist concepts can get a bit knotty, but Hennessey's case that these writers have been unjustly overlooked convinces. Leftist scholars will want to add this to their libraries. Photos. *(Aug.)*

★ The Singers Talk: The Greatest Singers of Our Time Discuss the One Thing They're Never Asked About: Their Voices

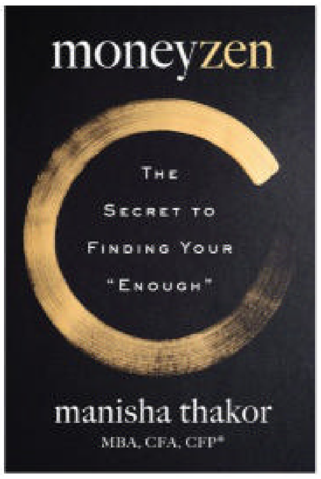
Jason Thomas Gordon. Permuted, $32 (432p) ISBN 978-1-63758-699-3


THE SINGERS TALK
THE GREATEST SINGERS OF OUR TIME DISCUSS THE ONE THING THEY'RE NEVER ASKED ABOUT: THEIR VOICES
JASON THOMAS GORDON

Gordon, drummer and front man of the band Kingsize, debuts with a fascinating, star-studded look at how singers relate to their most valuable asset: their voices. Asking vocalists how they "do their job night after night," particularly given "how exhausting, frustrating, and fragile the human voice" is, Gordon gathers insights from Tony Bennett, Public Enemy's Chuck D, Stevie Nicks of Fleetwood Mac, Bruce Springsteen, and others. For the Yeah Yeah Yeahs' Karen O, singing is "so much more than hitting the right note. It's about connecting with the audience, connecting with something divine... to your most primitive and deepest intuition." Lionel Richie discusses his early reluctance to perform, and his ideal mental state before going onstage ("If you're not a little stage frightened... then you're not really present"), while elsewhere, stars explain how they keep their voices tuned up on tour—from avoiding acidic foods (Sammy Hagar) to practicing specific warm-ups and warm-downs (Thom Yorke of Radiohead). This is a captivating look at both the nitty-gritty preparation and emotional energy that "it takes [for artists] to stand up to that mic... reach down into their guts, and give everything they've got for the sake of the song." Its star power and up-close, revelatory detail will keep readers riveted from start to finish. *(Sept.)*

MoneyZen: The Secret to Finding Your "Enough"

Manisha Thakor, with Lisa Sweetingham. Harper Business, $28.99 (208p) ISBN 978-0-06-324796-3

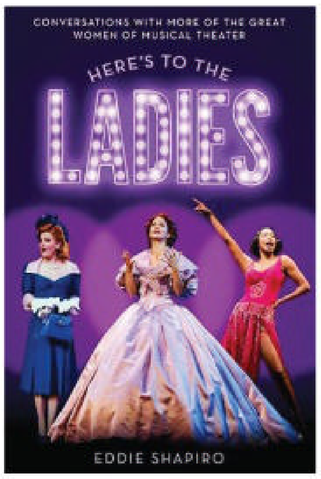


"Too many of us live our lives to optimize the soul-destroying equation of: self-worth = net worth," according to this encouraging manual. CFA Thakor (*On My Own Two Feet*) argues that readers should develop a healthier relationship with their career by placing less importance on keeping up with the Joneses and instead spending time and money on more fulfilling endeavors, which she suggests might take the form of hanging out with loved ones or starting a new hobby. She contends that workaholism is driven by a tendency to draw misleading comparisons between oneself and others (easy access to credit and well-manicured social media presences can create the false appearance that others are better off than they are, Thakor points out), as well as by the erroneous belief that "possessions, symbols, accomplishments, numbers, titles, experiences, or credentials" give life meaning. Her appraisal of the factors underlying America's work obsession is perceptive, and her personal account of burning out from working multiple all-nighters per week and competing with coworkers to curry favor with superiors at a "*Game of Thrones*–like" global investment bank will resonate with overextended readers. It's a potent call to get away from one's desk. *(Aug.)*

Here's to the Ladies: Conversations with More of the Great Women of Musical Theater

Eddie Shapiro. Oxford Univ., $39.95 (400p) ISBN 978-0-19-758553-5

Theater journalist Shapiro follows up *Nothing Like a Dame* with another collection of intimate interviews spotlighting Broadway's female stars. Among other topics, the conversations touch on the late


CONVERSATIONS WITH MORE OF THE GREAT WOMEN OF MUSICAL THEATER
HERE'S TO THE
LADIES
EDDIE SHAPIRO

Barbara Cook's deep-seated performance anxiety; Adrienne Warren's surreal, out-of-body experience playing Tina Turner in the musical *Tina* while Turner watched from offstage, singing along to "Proud Mary"; and Mary Beth Peil's "joined at the hip" bond with Yul Brynner, the gracious yet exacting director and actor she played opposite in *The King and I*. Interview subjects also delve into the complexities of being a woman in show business. Female actors "are expected to show so much passion and confidence, but... accept so much powerlessness in the everyday," explains Melissa Errico, whose credits include *Les Misérables* (1988) and *Amour* (2002). "I've been inclined to present myself as a hot mess," she continues. "I could see that affirming my intellect wasn't going to get me anywhere." While the discussions sometimes meander (several lasted for 12 or 13 hours, according to Shapiro, who interviewed some actors more than once), theater fans will relish both the fun backstage detail and the vulnerable, fine-grained introspection that Shapiro draws out of his subjects. It's a revealing peek behind the curtain. *(Aug.)*

Explaining Life Through Evolution

Prosanta Chakrabarty. MIT, $22.95 trade paper (280p) ISBN 978-0-262-54625-6

This eclectic primer by Chakrabarty (*A Guide to Academia*), a biology professor at Louisiana State University, explores the science of evolution. The author expounds on three proposed explanations for genetic variation: natural selection (survival of the fittest), sexual selection (survival of the most attractive), and Japanese biologist Motoo Kimura's "neutral theory of molecular evolution," which posits that much genetic difference between species is effectively random and has little bearing on individuals' ability to survive and reproduce. However, the presentation of the science is somewhat scattered, with tidbits about Aristotle's hierarchy of living creatures, the nature of truth, and what humans share with their distant marine ancestors (the larynx evolved from gills) jumbled together. Nonetheless, the freewheeling spirit sometimes works to the book's benefit (one amusing chapter offers a comic of Charles Darwin's life) and the author's humorous tone keeps the proceedings light ("Nipples on males—what's up with that?"). The strongest sections propose how science can inform political debates, as when Chakrabarty notes that the existence of same-sex mating across the animal kingdom casts doubt on the assumptions of those who consider homosexuality "unnatural." Pop science fans willing to look past some disorganization will be rewarded. *(Aug.)*

The Dawn of a Mindful Universe: A Manifesto for Humanity's Future

Marcelo Gleiser. HarperOne, $29.99 (256p) ISBN 978-0-06-305687-9

Dartmouth College physicist Gleiser (*The Island of Knowledge*) comes up short in this underwhelming call to "reinvent ourselves as a species." To unite humanity in the fight against climate change, he urges readers to view themselves as sharing a "spiritual connection" with all other life on Earth, suggesting that the planet's unique status in the universe makes it "a sacred realm that deserves respect and veneration." He laments the pragmatic focus of the "orthodox scientific worldview," positing that Copernicus's discovery that Earth isn't the center of the universe led people to disregard the planet as "irrelevant in the big scheme of things" and that Isaac Newton's mechanistic explanations of the laws of motion and gravity undermined humanity's reverence for the natural world. Unfortunately, Gleiser's plan for a brighter future, which hinges on forging a "spiritual reconnection with Earth and the biosphere," is vague and simplistic, and his assertions of humanity's need for "engagement of body and mind with the land" do little to clarify what such a reconnection would look like. The hazy bromides grate and Gleiser isn't persuasive in claiming that learning to appreciate the rarity of life in the cosmos will suffice in making people better stewards of the environment. Earth deserves a better defense. *(Aug.)*

All Pride, No Ego: A Queer Executive's Journey to Living and Leading Authentically

Jim Fielding. Wiley, $28 (240p) ISBN 978-1-394-16528-5

Fielding, who has worked as an executive at Claire's, Disney, and 20th Century Fox, debuts with an uplifting guide for honing one's leadership skills. Contending that if readers "control the controllable," they'll be better equipped to handle unforeseeable obstacles, Fielding shares how his plan for reassuming direct control of Disney stores after a long-term license agreement ended helped prepare the business to weather the Great Recession, which began three months after the company implemented Fielding's strategy. The author extols the importance of surrounding oneself with a good team by describing how much he cherishes the support and camaraderie of his younger sister and discussing the fruitful partnership he shared with a product developer during his tenure as a district manager at Gap. Fielding also details the difficulties he's faced as an openly gay executive, noting that during his first stint as a CEO, for the women's clothing brand Claire's, he "was a bit of a unicorn" and didn't know any gay chief executives he could reach out to for support. As Fielding admits, his "advice is relatively simple and not that unique," but it's nonetheless sensible, and his affecting account of grappling with insecurities as a gay man in corporate America adds pathos. Readers will feel heartened. *(Aug.)*

When a Loved One Has Dementia: A Comforting Companion for Family and Friends

Eveline Helmink. The Experiment, $21.95 (224p) ISBN 978-1-615199-34-1

Journalist Helmink (*The Handbook for Bad Days*) draws on personal experience to share guidance for navigating a loved one's cognitive decline in this compassionate outing. At first, Helmink and her family failed to recognize the signs of her mother's early-onset dementia, which began in her 60s. However, her mother's condition gradually deteriorated until she was diagnosed; after a "lengthy spell" of home care, she entered an assisted living facility. Helmink writes that it was wrenching to see her once vibrant mother

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FICTION

8 Lives of a Century-Old Trickster *Mirinae Lee.* Harper, ISBN 978-0-06-324042-1, June

★ **Austral** *Carlos Fonseca, trans. by Megan McDowell.* Farrar, Straus and Giroux, ISBN 978-0-374-60665-7, May

★ **The Beast You Are** *Paul Tremblay.* Morrow, ISBN 978-0-06-306996-1, July

★ **Can't Stand the Heat** *Season Vining*. Tule, ISBN 978-1-959988-56-4, July

Nightbloom *Peace Adzo Medie.* Algonquin, ISBN 978-1-64375-284-6, June

The Rain *Joseph A. Turkot.* Blackstone, ISBN 979-8-200-83502-7, July

Star Bringer *Tracy Wolff and Nina Croft*. Red Tower, ISBN 978-1-64937-406-6, July

NONFICTION

Break the Wheel: Ending the Cycle of Police Violence *Keith Ellison*. Twelve, ISBN 978-1-538-72563-4, May

Day of the Assassins: A History of Political Murder *Michael Burleigh.* Picador UK, ISBN 978-1-529-03017-4, July

Involuntary Consent: The Illusion of Choice in Japan's Adult Video Industry *Akiko Takeyama.* Stanford Univ., ISBN 978-1-503-63378-0, July

Migrant Aesthetics *Glenda R. Carpio*. Columbia Univ., ISBN 978-0-231-20757-7, July

Osip Mandelstam: A Biography *Ralph Dutli, trans. by Ben Fowkes*. Verso, ISBN 978-1-83976-158-4, May

The Power of One *Frances Haugen*. Little Brown, ISBN 978-0-316-47522-8, June

Travellers Through Time: A Gypsy History *Jeremy Harte*. Reaktion, ISBN 978-1-789-14716-2, May

get lost on a family museum trip, or struggle to independently perform day-to-day tasks, but also describes moments of real tenderness amid the disease's ravages, including her father's habit of listening to music with her mother when he visits her at the facility. Helmink urges caregivers to practice self-compassion, seek help with caretaking duties, and remember that their feelings and frustrations about the disease are valid, not selfish. She also provides revealing insights into how dementia can destabilize the identity of both sufferer and caretaker: "Are you still somebody's child when that person no longer identifies as your mother?" she asks. Though Helmink's stream-of-consciousness style has its drawbacks, including some unnecessary repetitions, she provides a moving meditation on treating loved ones facing dementia with dignity and love. This is a valuable resource. *(Aug.)*

Religion/Spirituality

Women, Work, & Calling: Step into Your Place in God's World

Joanna Meyer. IVP, $15 trade paper (128p) ISBN 978-1-5140-0793-8

Meyer, director of public engagement at the Denver Institute for Faith & Work, debuts with an encouraging guide for "career-minded Christian women" who often "feel most lonely... in their faith communities." While "our roles in public life have grown, the church's vision for women's work... has not," writes Meyer, asserting that "women are vital players in God's redemptive purposes," and "reflect the glory of our Creator by being like him—creators who work." Among other issues women encounter in the workplace, Meyer takes note of the "subtle but powerful dynamic that suggests [they] can be regarded as competent or likable, but not both." She advises women to ensure their accomplishments are "measurable and visible," and to reflect on how Christ was "able to hold... seemingly conflicting characteristics in tension," like "tenderness" and "moral outrage." She also highlights the importance of mentoring and networking with other women, and offers suggestions for "stay[ing] true to yourself in spite of pressures at work." While some strategies may prove less actionable than others, Meyer successfully delivers the inspiring message that Christian working women should "lean hard on the Lord and allow his love to guide and sustain you." This is perfect for those who feel caught between their religious and professional identities. *(Oct.)*

★ How Far to the Promised Land

Esau McCaulley. Convergent, $27 (240p) ISBN 978-0-593-24108-0

McCaulley (*Reading While Black*), an associate professor of the New Testament at Wheaton College, explores racism, poverty, and faith in his searing memoir. McCaulley grew up in Huntsville, Ala., with a mother who was fundamentally rendered a single parent after his father became addicted to drugs. He saw football as his most promising route to a college scholarship, but when an injury seemed to nix those plans, he turned to his studies, eager to prove himself as "more than a Black body, useful only when I collided with other desperate boys wrestling for control of the football." He negotiated pressures in college to conform to the often-narrow expectations of a progressive Black intellectual, struggled with faith and purpose, and later found his calling: "to put into words and on paper the varied experiences of God in the souls of Black folks." With uncompromising honesty and deep introspection, McCaulley complicates the narrative of "overcoming racism and poverty as a hero," and instead sets his story amid larger communal narratives of Blackness, because "the focus on a singular person obscures the truth that the gifted are not the only ones who succeed, the weak are not the only ones who perish, and the America we laud for producing victors still creates too many victims." This is powerful and necessary. *(Sept.)*

Miscarried Hope: Journeying with Jesus Through Pregnancy and Infant Loss

Rachel Lohman. Revell, $16.99 (160p) ISBN 978-0-800-74300-0

Pastor Lohman debuts with a deeply felt, faith-based guide to help readers navigate the emotional tolls of losing a child during pregnancy or infancy. After the author miscarried during her first trimester, it took months to realize that, along with losing "my blissful expectations of motherhood... my relatively uncomplicated relationship with God, and my trust in my body," she'd lost something else: hope. Using the Christian Holy Week as a blueprint, Lohman leads readers through the "Five Stages of Hope" related to miscarriage or infant death: expectation (Palm Sunday), shock (the last supper), despair (Good Friday), grief (Silent Saturday) and active hope (resurrection Sunday). Just as the disciples were shocked "as Jesus told them he would soon be gone" during the last supper, for example, so do grieving moms undergo emotional whiplash when their parenthood dreams evaporate. Meanwhile, the renewal of resurrection Sunday mirrors how readers can "open [themselves] up to the possibility for God's future redemption." Lohman doesn't aim to expedite the grieving process, but offers support to readers, who will find the most solace in her perceptive renderings of loss's emotional nuances: "Hope just began to appear again, unexpectedly yet slowly, not erasing grief but growing alongside it." This will be a balm to grieving Christian moms. *(Aug.)*

The Place We Make: Breaking the Legacy of Legalized Hate

Sarah L. Sanderson. Waterbrook, $25 (256p) ISBN 978-0-593-44473-3

In this thought-provoking debut, journalist Sanderson unpacks the legacy of Oregon's 1844–1926 racial exclusion laws, which "banned Black people from… being within [the state's] borders." Sanderson became curious when she stumbled on an unfamiliar name while researching another topic—James Vanderpool, who was legally removed from Oregon for being Black in 1851. With few records available, she turned her search toward the four men responsible for Vanderpool's arrest: John McLoughlin, Theophilus Magruder, Thomas Nelson, and Ezra Fisher, all of them pioneers who are memorialized in the Oregon State Capitol Senate chambers. Aware that Fisher was a relative (she later learned she shared an ancestor with Magruder), Sanderson set out to understand how "racism [had] warped the minds, imaginations, and behaviors of those who took it upon themselves to master Oregon." Along the way, she reflects on her own relationship as a white woman to the state's racial present and past. While Sanderson's narrative makes for occasionally uncomfortable reading, as when she discovered her ingrained racism on a mission trip ("I first realized White supremacy lived in me on my first morning in Malawi…. I wanted to spend myself on behalf of the needy, but I was about the discover the depths of my own neediness"), she offers an admirably candid self-examination and an insightful look at an underdocumented episode of racism in American history. It's worth checking out. *(Aug.)*

[Q&A]

PW TALKS WITH ESAU MCCAULLEY

Complicating the Narrative

McCaulley, an associate professor of the New Testament at Wheaton College, delves into race, religion, and poverty in *How Far to the Promised Land* (Convergent, Sept.; reviewed on p. 88).

You write that "the disheveled masses weren't always noble. We could be as callous as the wealthy." What did you mean by that?

The book is trying to humanize the people we often dehumanize. When I first started working on it, I read a lot of what I call Horatio Alger stories dipped in chocolate—these stories of Black people who go from poverty to success and then it becomes a question of how they overcame it. It's kind of like the Hunger Games—because the Hunger Games allows people to think that if one person makes it in the system, the system isn't broken. I really wanted to write a story with people who aren't simply plot points in the hero's narrative. So when I said "the disheveled masses" aren't always noble, I was saying that yes, the poor are poor for societal and cultural and political reasons, but we also are moral agents who make our own decisions.

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You also make the point that it's important to find beauty even in dark places.

People see the beauty in my story, potentially because I grew up in one place and I ended up in another place. But how do I tell the story of my childhood without casting the entire thing as a wash or a write-off? In order to do that, I had to try to tell the story of the joy that was there. In the book, I describe a basketball game I played with a bunch of drug dealers. And that was a genuinely happy moment, but I also knew that those same drug dealers were destroying our community. It was a question of talking about that complexity, and how both joy and difficulty can arise from the same place.

How does your faith figure into the narrative?

My Christian faith has been one of the means by which I survive all of the things that America does to Black people. That's the tricky part. Black boys in the South don't always get to tell their stories, the things that we've seen on our journeys, and the role that God plays in all of it. We either get boxed into religious memoirs, or it's a memoir about race politics in America. But what's important to me is that I'm not just one of those things, but all of those things. Poverty's a part of the story. Race is a part of the story. Religion is part of the story. I really hope that readers will allow a human life to be as complex as it is. People ask you to sum up a book, but how do you sum up a life?

—JULIE NAUGHTON

Children's/YA

Picture Books

Hopscotch

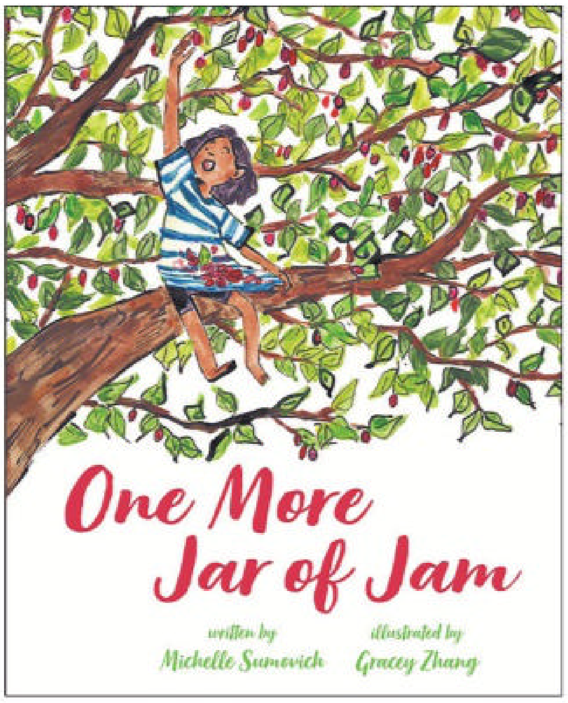
Marie-Louise Gay. Groundwood, $19.99 (40p) ISBN 978-1-77306-843-5

The child who narrates this dreamlike telling begins the story focused on a beloved dog named Jackson who's tied to a clothesline in the neighbor's garden. The child envisions freeing Jackson ("All I need is a long ladder"), until one day the pooch disappears; only his collar remains. The emotional loss ("I will wait for him forever") pervades what follows, as the child moves to a new town ("Jackson will never, *ever* find me!") and enters a new landscape and school. Gay (the Stella and Sam series) conveys with perceptive power a contrast between the anxious fantasy of the child's world ("Out of nowhere... a huge ogre appears") and the reality of an adult's ("Say hello to the crossing guard, Ophelia"). Memories of Jackson persist until at last the child is able to tell him "au revoir." Sweetly styled watercolor, acrylic, wax crayon, and pencil images temper the story's moments of loss, centering figures of varied skin tones that look like diminutive toys, while Gay's writing zeroes in on the way the child, whose skin tone reflects the white of the book's paper, uses the power they have to cope with change ("I draw an extra-long giant magic hopscotch"). Ages 3–6. *(Aug.)*

The Biggest Mistake

Camilla Pintonato, trans. from the Italian by Debbie Bibo. Eerdmans, $17.99 (48p) ISBN 978-0-8028-5611-1

When Papa Lion decrees, "It's time for you to catch a gazelle on your own," his earnest little yellow cub readily accepts the challenge. But the cub's "mistakes"—the various ways he underestimates what it will take to catch the fleet-footed prey—keep adding up. In minimally detailed vignettes, rendered in thick outlines and uniform fill-in color, the cub can't outrun the gazelle or outsmart her (despite drawing a "cunning scheme" involving a camouflaged hole). And following an elephant auntie's suggestion—asking "Can you let me catch you, PLEASE?"—gets him nowhere. The "Wile E. Coyote and the Road Runner" vibe is strong in this one, albeit minus the bodily harm (the only injury is to the cub's budding ego, especially when other gazelles gather to watch the fun). But when the cub seems to throw in the towel, it turns out that the biggest mistake isn't his, before Pintonato (*Detective Mole*) reveals one more trick, silly and reassuring, up her narrative sleeve. Bibo's translation strikes an arch, accessible tone, and playful typography helps those reading aloud hit all the comic beats. Ages 3–7. *(Aug.)*



Sumovich and Zhang lovingly consider a tree and its fruits—literal and figurative (reviewed on p. 92).

Chompy Has a Friend for Lunch

Matt Satterthwaite and Pedro Eboli. Scholastic, $17.99 (32p) ISBN 978-1-3388-4706-2

This ebulliently cartooned interactive story opens with a yellow-horned, googly eyed monster, Chompy, running into the frame until it's almost nose-to-nose with the reader: "Ooh! Ooh! Ooh!" it says. "Hi! I'm so happy you're here!" Chompy readily admits that everyone else in its family prefers to consume humans than hang out with them, but no matter: the monster requests a high five ("Friends do that, right?"), achieved with a book flap that reveals Chompy's open, extended palm, and the playdate is off to a rousing start. Or not. The monster, who can't help noticing the reader's delicious smell, asks for a "teensy-weensy" lick of their elbow (a flap reveals a big red tongue), followed by a request for a "tiny lil' nibble" of the reader's nose (another flap shows Chompy's entire, unflossed mouth, which harbors a teddy bear between two teeth). Fortunately, the taste confirms that Chompy finds humans "TERRIBLE!" cuisine, and via a double gatefold of Chompy's open arms, the two playmates can hug it out. Most kids have experienced first-playdate awkwardness; Canadian TV and film writer and producer Satterthwaite and Brazilian director and animator Eboli push it to a new—and chompy—level. Ages 4–6. *(Aug.)*

Giants Are Very Brave People

Florence Parry Heide, illus. by Merrill Rainey. Holiday House, $18.99 (32p) ISBN 978-0-8234-5041-1

Updated with new illustrations from Rainey (*Asteroid Goldberg*), this previously published story by late author and poet Heide stars a blue-skinned boy named Bigelow who's anxious about nearly everything, including clouds, alphabet soup, and rainwater. Then one day Bigelow encounters a "little lady" called Mrs. Pimberly, portrayed with pale skin, who is even more afraid than he is—and he's the reason why. Compared to Mrs. Pimberly, it turns out, Bigelow is an actual giant. But Bigelow is kind and considerate (he assures her he won't eat her, and sits down carefully so as not to squash her house), and Mrs. Pimberly offers up advice, suggesting that *acting* brave might result in *feeling* brave, and teaching him "Fee Fi Fo Fum" as a mantra. Newly confident, Bigelow returns the favor by setting up his enormous toy train for the untraveled Mrs. Pimberly, helping her to see the world for the first time. The storytelling's unabashed sincerity balances well-trod themes of empathy and self-esteem, and the new illustrations follow suit, channeling an openhearted feel with big shapes, a playful palette, and poster-like compositions. Ages 4–7. *Illustrator's agent: Teresa Kietlinski, Bookmark Literary. (Aug.)*

A Book About Bupkes

Leslie Kimmelman, illus. by Roxana de Rond. Kar-Ben, $19.99 (24p) ISBN 978-1-72846-022-2; $8.99 paper ISBN 978-1-72846-029-1

Bupkes is a Yiddish word that usually

continued on p. 92

Music Makers

Five tuneful picture books center change, courage, and emotion.

Dolly Parton's Billy the Kid Makes It Big

Dolly Parton with Erica S. Perl, illus. by MacKenzie Haley.
Penguin Workshop, $19.99 (40p) ISBN 978-0-593-66157-4

With Perl, Parton expands her song "Makin' Fun Ain't Funny" into a bighearted anti-bullying fable starring a French bulldog with big dreams. "Born with an ear for music," hound Billy the Kid heads to Nashville to pursue dreams of joining a country music band. Despite months "wishing, hoping, and practicing," an encounter with dog musician Big Earl soon leaves Billy discouraged ("It had been a ruff day"). But Billy finally makes it to the Battle of the Bow-Wows after joining a band of small dogs, and when Big Earl starts picking on someone else, the puptagonist hatches a plan to defend his friends so they can give a "totally pawsome" performance. Warm pastel-hued rainbows carry musical notes throughout Haley's images of cartoon pooches in a message-driven story that includes plenty of Easter eggs for Dolly fans. Lyrics to "Makin' Fun Ain't Funny" conclude. Ages 4–7. *(Apr.)*

Body Music: Poems About the Noises Your Body Makes

Jane Yolen and Ryan G. Van Cleave, illus. by Luis San Vicente.
Moonshower, $18.99 (32p) ISBN 978-1-63819-201-5

Yolen and Van Cleave give voice to bodily noises—from butts that "BOOM" to giggles and gasps—in a riotously silly poetry collection perfectly tuned to a toilet humor–loving audience. Describing incidental body noises such as "bumbling,/ crumbling, rumbling, stumbling" stomachs, the authors capitalize on explosive consonants and rhythms to embed a snappy musicality in the text. They strike a balance between education and absurdity, pairing the poems with scientific facts and related trivia on topics including music made with bodies ("West Africa's hambone, Ethiopian armpit music"), wheezing snakes, and a late 19th-century Parisian "fartiste." With bold lines and dramatic color blocking, San Vicente's artwork features disproportionate, angular figures of various skin tones with exaggerated facial expressions and cartoonish physicality, amplifying the raucous energy of this over-the-top collection. Ages 4–8. *(Sept.)*

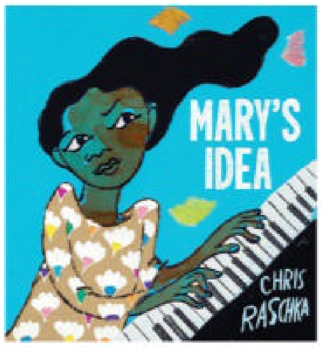
La Guitarrista

Lucky Diaz, illus. by Micah Player. HarperCollins, $19.99 (40p)
ISBN 978-0-06-325415-2

The creators of *Paletero Man* deliver a vibrant rhyming celebration of an L.A. neighborhood community and one Latinx-cued child's determination to find "the song in my heart." When Canta, who loves to admire the expensive guitars at a local shop, finds a broken guitar in a dumpster, the story's young narrator enlists neighbors' help in repairing it before joining the "cool" kids at music school. Classmates mock the child's sound, but a supportive teacher, Señora Clemente, encourages Canta to "Tune those doubts out!" Diaz's text flows smoothly between English and Spanish as a refrain of "Strum! Strum! Strum!" propels Canta's journey from observer to performer. Emotions leap from Player's warm-palette digital illustrations, which utilize emanata and deep perspective to create a sense of movement and passionate energy around Canta's larger-than-life dreams. Ages 4–8. *(May)*

Mary's Idea

Chris Raschka. Greenwillow, $19.99 (32p) ISBN 978-0-06-321050-9



On the jacket of this rhyming verse telling inspired by the life of jazz pianist Mary Lou Williams (1920–1981), Raschka, in ink, oil pastel, and watercolor, paints the figure's face and body seated at a piano. Inside, though, spreads center the figure's hands, often poised over the keyboard, as reiterative text describes how "It was Mary's idea"—"to play// the piano at three" as well as "to make// the songs, to lead the band." The music she creates appears as ribbons of bright swatched squares emanating from the instrument. In a book that's less conventional biography than hymn to Williams's spirit, the leitmotif "It was Mary's idea" underscores the musician's charting her own course and making her own decisions, including one "to stop" playing before beginning again "for people, for God, and me"—a change visualized in swirls of color. Back matter supplies more about Williams's life. Ages 4–8. *(May)*

La Mariachi

Isabel Estrada, illus. by Addy Rivera Sonda. Sleeping Bear, $18.99
(32p) ISBN 978-1-53411-191-2

A barrier-breaking mariachi performer inspires her hometown through music in this sensorial picture book. Young Tuchi makes a "songful wish" that she will someday play the "rousing rhythms" and "sweet cinnamon melodies" she dances to in the plaza, but her teacher says that mariachi is solely for boys. Believing "it's time things changed," Tuchi's nana teaches her to play the guitarrón to prove she deserves a spot in the school mariachi ensemble. Estrada imbues the text with sonority through experiential imagery and onomatopoeia. Though the time period remains unspecified throughout, italicized Spanish phrases and interweaved cultural details animate Tuchi's multigenerational Latinx-cued community, and Sonda's sometimes rigid, color-saturated illustrations conjure a celebratory tone. Back matter describes mariachi instruments. Ages 6–7. *(July)*

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connotes lack of value (e.g., "You know bupkes about that"). But Kimmelman (*Write On, Irving Berlin!*) and de Rond (*Milo and Monty*) start on a more expansive, neutral note. Defining the word as simply "nothing"—or, as they put it, "Zero. Zilch"—they use it as a kind of linguistic linchpin for a pale-skinned protagonist, young Zoe, to connect with and help others in a community of individuals shown with varied abilities and skin tones. In an early vignette, Zoe and her mother harvest all the vegetables from a garden, leaving behind "Bupkes!" But when they make a gift delivery of fresh-picked produce, "their neighbor is happy." Similarly, when Zoe encounters a child sitting alone on a bench filled with belongings ("There's no room for anything—or anyone—else"), she introduces herself, the two go off to play, and the bench is now "Bupkes! Empty bench. Full hearts." Slice-of-life drawings and upbeat characters, rendered in loopy ink lines with soft washes, assure readers that the world moves forward on even the smallest acts of kindness. Or, as closing lines read, "The thing is, bupkes may mean nothing… but it can feel like everything!" Ages 4–8. *(Aug.)*

Every Night at Midnight

Peter Cheong. Atheneum, $18.99 (40p) ISBN 978-1-6659-1738-4

In a solo debut, Cheong (*I'm a Hero Too*) grabs readers' attention right out of the gate with a sentence that becomes the book's refrain: "Every night at midnight," says the book's narrating child protagonist, portrayed with tan skin and bathed in moonlight, "I turn into a wolf." Digital artwork rendered in multilayered expressionistic compositions and tones of purple and black show the transformed, sleek black wolf—still clothed in the child's red sweater—confidently navigating quiet streets and rooftops. But while the child clearly enjoys the independence that accompanies this exceptional life, readers will sense a yearning for connection; having declined so many invitations for sleepovers, the wolf-child is left alone by classmates, who are portrayed with various skin tones. Then, one night, the wolf has a joyful encounter with another of their species ("We leap, we bound, we *fly*") and eventually discovers the new wolf's identity—and that of other local animal shapeshifters. Cheong's message is as striking as the title's art and soul-searching narrative voice: self-acceptance is important, but being open to the possibilities within others can take one to surprising places—and enjoyable sleepovers. Ages 4–8. *Agent: Paige Terlip, Andrea Brown Literary. (Aug.)*

One More Jar of Jam

Michelle Sumovich, illus. by Gracey Zhang. Dial, $18.99 (40p) ISBN 978-0-593-11267-0

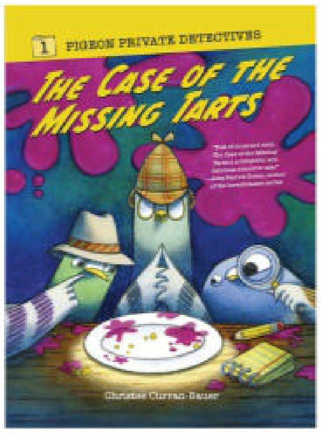
In a picture book debut, Sumovich writes a second-person ode to a beloved mulberry tree that invites readers right in. Via warmly stroked spreads, Zhang (*When Rubin Plays*) paints the child narrator, portrayed with brown skin, perched in the tree's branches: "If you ever have a mulberry tree," the text begins, "you'll learn/ there's nowhere sweeter to sit/ than on branches heavy with warm berries." Beginning with the same initial line, successive verses describe jam making, and jam jar counting, too, as the precious jars dwindle, "Gone to sticky Grandma's table./ Gone to sweeten neighbors' bread." When a storm topples the tree ("Its thick trunk stretched across the lawn,/ broken and cracked and done") the summer proves as "fruitless and dry as toast." But the following spring reveals a miracle that might just extend to the titular "one more jar." Knowledge that comes with the caretaking and harvesting of trees, a seasonal scale, and affectionate images of an interracial family who share joy and loss together all flavor this personal-feeling tale. Ages 4–8. *Agent (for author and illustrator): Hannah Mann, Writers House. (Aug.)*

Fiction

The Case of the Missing Tarts (Pigeon Private Detectives #1)

Christee Curran-Bauer. Union Square Kids, $13.99 (80p) ISBN 978-1-45494-361-7

In this humorous illustrated solo debut, Curran-Bauer introduces three birds of a feather who detect together: Martin P. Sweets, Felix Danish, and Ralph Custard, the Pigeon Private Detectives. When someone steals Mama Pigeon's famous jam tarts—made with love and one supersecret ingredient—the detectives resolve to find the pastries before they are eaten, or worse, become stale. But the detectives are stumped when following a trail of crumbs leads to a dead end, and attempts to lure suspects into confessing using Mama Pigeon's cookies fail. It's only after Detective Sweets divulges the jam tarts' secret ingredient that the dessert-napper reveals himself (by getting noisily sick into a bucket). Desperate to become a baker and star in a cooking show, the perpetrator had the half-baked idea to steal the tarts for research purposes but is soon forced to confront the consequences of his actions—and is offered a second chance. Vibrant colored pencil and rounded shapes render playful images of mouthwatering treats and avian protagonists sporting deerstalker caps. Readers will flock to Curran-Bauer's lighthearted mystery. A glossary defining detective terms and a fact sheet conclude. Ages 6–9. *(Aug.)*



Calvin and the Sugar Apples

Inês F. Oliveira, illus. by Vanessa Balleza. Collective Book Studio, $14.95 (240p) ISBN 978-1-68555-219-0

Portuguese 10-year-old Amelia and her chinchilla Calvin, which she's had since she was a baby, are best friends. "He would give me two things I couldn't get from any person: time to listen to me and silence to let me think," Amelia says. But when Calvin goes missing, and her parents inform her that he has died, Amelia doesn't believe them. Without Calvin, Amelia struggles to regulate her emotions, which are tumultuous after she's ditched by her best friend Camila, who decides she wants to perform solo in their school's upcoming talent show. The longer Calvin is gone, the more melancholy Amelia feels, until she befriends new girl Iris, whose father recently died. The girls develop an instant connection over their shared losses, and as Amelia reconnects with Camila, she slowly accepts the loss of Calvin and learns to move forward. Debut author Oliveira's lush prose brings the Portugal setting to life and portrays

Amelia’s grief with realism. Her struggle to manage her emotions, as well as the deeper understanding she reaches of herself and the people around her, is endearing and rewarding. Balezza’s b&w pencil illustrations appear throughout, adding nuance to Amelia’s heightened feelings. Ages 7–10. *(Aug.)*

Batu and the Search for the Golden Cup

Zira Nauryzbai and Lilya Kalaus, trans. from the Russian by Shelley Fairweather-Vega. Amazon Crossing Kids, $17.99 (316p) ISBN 978-1-66250-702-1

Debut authors Nauryzbai and Kalaus employ Kazakh mythology to craft a thrilling series-opening fantasy about a contemporary tween who accidentally summons a warrior prince from 2,000 years in the past. Batu, who lives in Almaty, is struggling to cope with his family’s preparations for a new baby, and bullying from classmate Scorpion. After inadvertently calling upon Golden Warrior Aspara—the legendary 13-year-old hero of the Saka people—Aspara recruits Batu in his search for the Golden Cup, an ancient Saka relic. Dangerous encounters with evil spirits called Jeztyrnaq imperil their quest, forcing the duo to rely on Batu’s friends to survive. Things get even more treacherous when Scorpion and his meddling grandfather begin their own search for the Cup. Culturally significant details—including sensorial descriptions of the smell of dishes such as bauyrsaq and shelpek, and the intricate patterns of traditional Kazakh rugs—ground the characters’ journey in Batu’s present, even as the narrative swiftly shifts between contemporary action and scenes from Aspara’s past. Fans of fantasy adventures such as the Pandava series and Kiranmala and the Kingdom Beyond will enjoy the easy-to-root-for characters and familiar tropes that populate this action-packed tale. A glossary concludes. Ages 8–12. *(Aug.)*

Extra Normal

Kate Alice Marshall. Viking, $18.99 (240p) ISBN 978-0-593-52645-3

A tween who believes she is “nothing special” investigates strange occurrences on her street in this creepy supernatural thriller by Marshall (*Glassheart*). Though her adoptive siblings are a ghost, a boy with telekinesis, and a Deaf werewolf, 12-year-old Charlie Greer—the biological daughter of renowned paranormal investigators—exhibits no unique abilities of her own. As such, Charlie maintains household safety measures, an important job in a family comprising beings with volatile powers. Charlie is uneasy around the Weaver family, a smiley couple and their son who move to the neighborhood the same day her exhausted parents leave for vacation. Determined to uncover the Weavers’ secrets, she enlists her siblings and the family’s pseudo-pet, a possessed doll that resembles a housecat. But when no one shares her distrust of the newcomers, Charlie begins to suspect that mind-control may be at play and engages in increasingly risky espionage. Touching sibling dynamics add warmth to this keenly plotted nail-biter, which boasts appropriately atmospheric prose and thrills and chills that draw on classic horror movie elements. Charlie cues as white; supporting characters are described as having varied skin tones. Ages 8–12. *Agent: Lauren Spieller, Folio Literary Management. (Aug.)*

No One Leaves the Castle

Christopher Healy. Walden Pond, $19.99 (384p) ISBN 978-0-06-234194-5

When the priceless Emerald Axe of Angbar is stolen, the Angbar family hires infamous bounty hunter the Lilac to track down the purported thief, wizard Runar the Unknowable. What the Angbars don’t realize, however, is that the Lilac is a white-cued 14-year-old girl whose bard companion Dulcinetta—described as having “tawny cheeks and an array of short braids”—has greatly overexaggerated her reputation. Nevertheless, the Lilac successfully brings Runar (who claims innocence) back to Castle Angbar, where the missing axe has mysteriously returned—and is stolen again. To capture the true thief, Runar places the castle in an inescapable magical bubble, but his sudden murder makes the enchantment seem permanent. Now the Lilac must track down an assassin in a castle full of secrets before the culprit kills them all—if the rapidly constricting bubble doesn’t do it first. The Lilac and Dulcinetta make for a congenial crime-solving team, especially when pitted against the scandal-ridden residents of Castle Angbar. In this frenetic, tongue-in-cheek whodunit, Healy (the Perilous Journey of Danger and Mayhem series) blends magic and pandemonium with a locked-room murder mystery, invoking familiar Agatha Christie flair while throwing in copious amounts of dry humor. Ages 8–12. *Agent: Cheryl Pientka, Jill Grinberg Literary. (Aug.)*

Tessa Miyata Is No Hero

Julie Abe. Little, Brown, $16.99 (368p) ISBN 978-0-3164-4852-9

A determined tween trains to battle an ancient Japanese warrior threatening present-day Tokyo in this mythical fantasy adventure by Abe (*Alliana, Girl of Dragons*). Twelve-year-old Tessa Miyata, who has been raised by her Gram in California following her parents’ deaths, has been labeled a “weirdo” by her classmates for her ability to see things others can’t. Once summer begins, Tessa is excited to visit her paternal grandparents in Japan with her two older sisters, hoping for a break from her mysterious visions and a chance at a fresh start. Except she still sees things, including a strange glow emanating from the glass-encased daruma doll that Ojiichan sends her to deliver to an antique shop. When the case breaks, Tessa learns that it was binding the spirit of Taira Masakado, a thousand-year-old samurai lord who almost overthrew Japan. Accompanied by Jin Uehara, a neighborhood boy and martial arts whiz, and Kit, a magical fox spirit, Tessa must do whatever it takes to save Tokyo from the escaped lord. Otherworldly beings and ethereal landscapes, inspired by Japanese mythology, fill this energetic tale of acceptance and friendship that centers a compassionate, loyal protagonist. Ages 8–12. *Agent: Sarah Landis, Sterling Lord Literistic. (Aug.)*

TESSA MIYATA
IS NO HERO
JULIE ABE

The Nightmare House

Sarah Allen, illus. by Angie Hewitt. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, $17.99 (272p) ISBN 978-0-374-39095-2

White-cued 11-year-old Penny Hope's anxiety manifests as a real-life monster under her bed in this ethereal novel by Allen (*Breathing Underwater*). For the past four years, Penny's anxieties have been heightened by the presence of the Fear Maker, a creature of "nightmare and shadow" who lives beneath her bed. But now the Fear Maker, having become a corporeal entity, is stealing the "soul, their them-ness" of the people in her town. Only Penny can see her soulless neighbors' "blank, colorless, empty eyes," resulting in intense feelings of isolation. When her supportive poet grandmother encourages her to write about her fears and introduces her to homeschooled Indian-cued peer Aarush Banerjee, Penny feels as if she's found a bright spot. As the Fear Maker's power intensifies, however, Penny learns that to destroy him, she must "pick one thing you're afraid of, and do it." She resolves to face her fears by joining Aarush in a poetry contest, hoping to find the right words to overcome her anxieties. Poetic prose and visceral emotion infuse realistic depth into this mood-driven, allegorical portrayal of mental illness. Stark b&w illustrations by Hewitt employ a photo negative effect to accentuate Penny's brooding poems. Ages 10–12. *Agent: Rena Rossner, Deborah Harris Agency. (Aug.)*

Don't Want to Be Your Monster

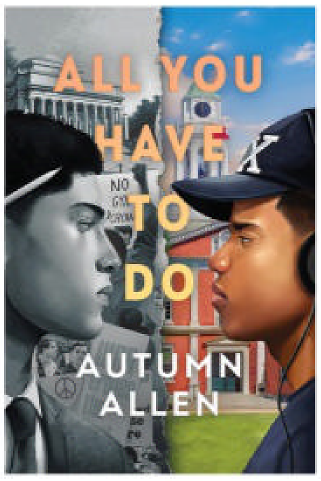
Deke Moulton. Tundra, $17.99 (304p) ISBN 978-1-77488-049-4

In an introspective debut, Moulton weaves a lightly scary murder mystery that explores themes of acceptance and family as experienced by a pair of vampire siblings. Ten-year-old Adam and his older foster brother Victor, 14, live with their ancient adoptive vampire mothers. The brothers are the latest in a long line of children rescued and raised by their foster mothers, who hide the family's paranormal abilities from the rest of their Pacific Northwest town. While Victor wants more than to live a quotidian life concealing his true self, Adam is preoccupied with worries surrounding how his vampiric nature could reflect on him if he were found out. Adam soon befriends mortal children Shoshana and Luis, while Victor develops an amicable rivalry with Luis's older sister, Alejandra. As stabbed corpses start appearing in town, and details point to the killer being a vampire hunter, the brothers' previously peaceful, if isolated, lives turn upside down. Frank and accessible prose proffers messaging surrounding what it means to be othered, offering myriad interpretations through Adam and Victor's alternating POVs. Fans of the supernatural intersecting with the mundane will find this intriguing interpretation of the vampire mythos refreshing. Adam and Victor read as white; context clues indicate racial diversity among the supporting cast. Ages 10–14. *Agent: Emily Forney, BookEnds Literary. (Aug.)*

★ All You Have to Do

Autumn Allen. Kokila, $19.99 (432p) ISBN 978-0-593-61904-9

Via perceptive prose and immersive chapters that alternate between 1968 and 1995, Allen highlights two Black teens' parallel struggles for racial justice, 27 years apart, in this powerful debut. In 1995 Massachusetts, high school senior Gibran faces severe consequences and possible expulsion after disrupting a racist talent show performance at majority-white Lakeside Academy. Though his family pleas with him to "just graduate" and "finish your last year" without incident, Gibran can't help but chafe against the injustice he witnesses daily. Meanwhile, in the days following Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination in 1968, Columbia student Kevin fights to halt the construction of a university expansion that would further gentrify the surrounding Harlem community. Other culturally relevant happenings, including Vietnam War protests, add narrative heft as Kevin's attempts to organize initiatives cause a rift between him and his parents. The two boys' efforts to balance their equity pursuits with interpersonal concerns, such as the importance of caring for oneself amid taxing mental challenges, are expertly rendered. Through Gibran and Kevin's individual exploits of equality and accountability, fully fleshed-out characters, and skillfully cultivated narrative tension, Allen creates a layered debut that is timely and resonant. Ages 12–up. *Agent: Cindy Uh, Creative Artists Agency. (Aug.)*



I'll Tell You No Lies

Amanda McCrina. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, $18.99 (224p) ISBN 978-0-374-39099-0

An encounter with a Soviet defector thrusts an American teenager into a political investigation in this tensely wrought Cold War historical novel set in 1955. After an automobile accident kills her mother, 18-year-old Shelby Blaine's intelligence officer father, Colonel Blaine, moves the two of them from Germany to Upstate New York's Griffiss Air Force Base, where he has been assigned to debrief a Soviet defector. When, at an official dinner, Shelby meets said defector—21-year-old Ukrainian pilot Maksym Kostyshyn—she immediately falls for his alluring, enigmatic personality. The next day, she discovers that Maksym has disappeared after coming under suspicion as a potential KGB spy. He soon shows up in Shelby's home, insisting that the FBI have made a mistake and begging her not to turn him in. As Shelby learns more about Maksym's past, including the time he spent as a prisoner in Auschwitz, she resolves to help him, despite the considerable risks. Via tight prose, McCrina (*The Silent Unseen*) effectively sketches a high-stakes spy thriller that features period-relevant intrigue and simmering romance. All characters cue as white. Back matter includes an author's note. Ages 12–up. *Agent: Jennie Kendrick, Red Fox Literary. (Aug.)*

A Little Like Waking

Adam Rex. Roaring Brook, $20.99 (400p) ISBN 978-1-2506-2191-7

While running late for a final exam and biking furiously through her small town, white teenager Zelda narrowly misses being hit by a car and meets Langston, a handsome Black boy sprawled in the bushes. This meet-cute—and various encounters before it, including the greeting she received from the gate to her house ("'*MOR*ning,' creaks the gate as it opens")—leads to Zelda realizing that her entire life, including her town and everyone in it, is a dream. Accompanied by Langston and her poetry-spouting, once-dead cat Patches, Zelda endeavors to travel to the edge of the vision, discover the identity of the dreamer, and hopefully return to waking life. Along the way, the trio meets fantastical apparitions (dodgeball-throwing gym teachers on horseback, a sinister laundromat clown, and a 1980s-themed carnival), and muddle through challenges in a world where the rules are constantly changing. Yet the closer they get to the edge, the more apprehensive Zelda and Langston become about their impending separation once the dreamer wakes. By turns existential and goofy, this campy, off-the-beaten-path story by Rex (*Fat Vampire*), propelled via an immediate, stream-of-conscious present-tense voice and sprinkled with beguiling b&w artwork, ruminates on themes of loss and love. Ages 12–up. *Agent: Steven Malk, Writers House. (Aug.)*

Sixteen Souls

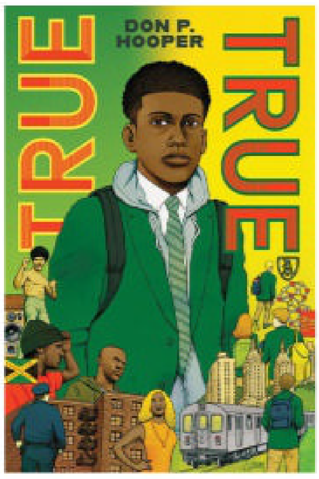
Rosie Talbot. Scholastic Press, $12.99 paper (368p) ISBN 978-1-339-01821-8

Talbot employs complex mythology to deliver a captivating supernatural thriller debut about queer teens who can speak to the dead. Ever since closeted 16-year-old Charlie Frith—who lost his legs to meningitis and uses prosthetics—was resuscitated after dying from a horrific ghost attack, he has been able to see and converse with the dead souls of York, England. After pushing away his two closest friends, he's also withdrawn emotionally and confides only in his constant spirit companions. But he's soon approached by Sam Harrow, a living transgender teenage seer who claims that local ghosts have been disappearing. Though Charlie has been wary of his hidden abilities, he hesitantly agrees to investigate with the help of his spectral best friends Heather and Ollie. When the group finds their first suspect murdered, Charlie worries that this investigation might be harder—and more dangerous—than he originally feared. While the worldbuilding can be a bit dense, labyrinthine twists and Charlie's emotionally resonant evolution from timid and uncertain seer to fiercely determined sleuth drive this paranormal escapade to its dynamic—and romantic—resolution. Main characters read as white. Ages 12–up. *(Aug.)*

★ True True

Don P. Hooper. Penguin/Paulsen, $19.99 (384p) ISBN 978-059-346210-2

Seventeen-year-old Gil, who is of Jamaican descent, is anxious about starting at a new school in Manhattan, away from his predominantly Caribbean Brooklyn neighborhood. But with a partial scholarship and Augustin Prep's top-notch robotics program on offer, Gil can't pass up the opportunity. Gil is also dealing with worries surrounding his grandmother's worsening dementia and his father's struggles with emigrating from Jamaica to the U.S. While trying to navigate the majority-white school's social politics, Gil meets Tammy, president of the Black Culture Club and editor-in-chief of the school newspaper. As favoritism and racism run rampant at Augustin, Gil—accompanied by Tammy and a group of BIPOC classmates—resolves to take a stand. In his efforts to better his new school, however, he neglects his friends and family. In this compassionate debut, a love letter to Brooklyn and Caribbean culture, Hooper paints an organic portrait of a Black teenager who feels caught between two different worlds. Gil's determination to lift up his peers often results in him disregarding his own needs and wants; through his earnest first-person POV and natural-feeling prose, Hooper presents valuable lessons on the healing power of community, forgiveness, and sharing one's truth. Ages 12–up. *(Aug.)*



Zhara (Guardians of Dawn #1)

S. Jae-Jones. Wednesday, $20 (416p) ISBN 978-1-250-19142-7

As rumors of reappearing ancient monsters and a coming plague circulate the Morning Realms, a 16-year-old magician and a prince in disguise band together seeking an ancient elemental warrior group to restore order to the land. On top of caring for her blind younger sister and appeasing her cruel and abusive stepmother, Jin Zhara must keep her magical gifts hidden—enchantments have been forbidden ever since magicians purportedly destroyed the kingdom 20 years ago. Whispers of returning abominations—possessed magicians turned into beasts—and a chance encounter with incognito prince Han, 17, thrust Zhara into a treacherous search for the legendary Guardians of Dawn, who believe that a demon is behind the monsters' appearance. As Zhara uncovers hidden depths to her powers, an arranged marriage, shocking secrets, and a blossoming forbidden romance further complicate the pair's quest. Some moments of levity and contemporary references occasionally distract from the high stakes, but the languorous pacing of the narrative, which unfolds via Zhara and Han's alternating perspectives, allows for expansive worldbuilding in this East Asian–inspired historical fantasy adventure, a series launch, by Jae-Jones (the Wintersong duology). Ages 12–up. *Agent: Katelyn Detweiler, Jill Grinberg Literary. (Aug.)*

The Hollow Boys (The Dream Rider Saga #1)

Douglas Smith. Spiral Path, $24.99 (382p) ISBN 978-1-928048-26-8

After his ancient-artifact-dealer parents suddenly disappeared while the family was on a jungle expedition eight years ago, then-nine-year-old Will Dreycott, who is half Japanese and assumed half white, returned home alone with no memory of how they went missing. Now 17, an agoraphobic billionaire, and the creator of the Dream Rider graphic novel series, Will hides one big secret: the world from his novels is real, and when Will sleeps, he becomes the comics' eponymous superhero protagonist and spends his nights gathering clues to crimes that he then passes on to journalist Harry. When teen boys start vanishing around town, Harry recruits Dream Rider along with Case, a Black teenager with the ability to hear voices warning of danger, who's searching for her younger brother, Fader. Smith imbues this series opener with otherworldly intrigue, developing an elaborately layered plot via bouncy prose that capably shifts between the dream realm, with its monstrous inhabitants, and Will's insular life. Depictions of close-knit relationships shine brightest throughout the novel, especially the familial bonds between Will and his parents and between Case and Fader, as well as the protagonists' budding romance. Ages 12–up. *(Self-published)*

The Boy You Always Wanted

Michelle Quach. HarperCollins/Tegen, $19.99 (336p) ISBN 978-0-06-303842-4

Seventeen-year-old Francine Zhang must convince her conflict-averse classmate Ollie Tran to honor Francine's A Gūng's dying wish in this feel-good novel by Quach (*Not Here to Be Liked*). After Francine learns that her grandfather worries about not having a male heir to carry on the family traditions, she approaches estranged friend Ollie with "The Plan": "Could you pretend to be my A Gūng's honorary male heir?" Since Ollie is also of Chinese Vietnamese descent, and the teens' families are old friends, he seems an ideal, if unwilling, candidate. When his concerns surrounding lackluster extracurriculars on his college résumé become prevalent, however, he agrees to the ploy in exchange for Francine's help in joining a club. As Francine confronts the self-imposed pressure to be a perfect problem solver and Ollie's membership in the school's Multicultural Club forces him to connect with his family in new and unfamiliar ways, romantic feelings blossom. While a quick resolution somewhat deflates the protagonists' arcs, Quach spins, via Francine and Ollie's alternating perspectives, an emotionally raw portrait of two seemingly opposite teens as they come together to help alleviate each other's personal challenges and grow romantically closer in the process. Ages 13–up. *Agent: Jenny Bent, Bent Agency. (Aug.)*

The Last Girls Standing

Jennifer Dugan. Putnam, $18.99 (320p) ISBN 978-059353-207-2

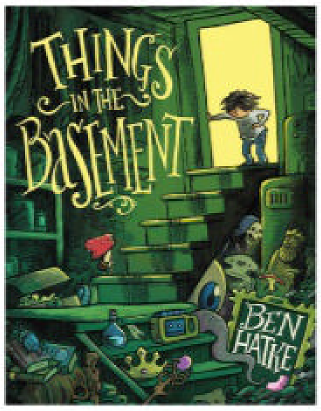
Following a summer camp massacre perpetrated by a mysterious group of animal-masked, machete-wielding assailants, teenagers Sloan and Cherry, the event's sole survivors, have become inseparable. Moreover, their shared trauma deepens their romantic relationship into a mutually codependent dynamic as the two struggle to adjust to life after the incident. But when one of the masked murderers is taken into custody, Sloan uncovers disturbing facts about the circumstances surrounding the events at Camp Money Springs that lead her to suspect Cherry of knowing more about the tragedy than she's been letting on. Ominous motives, misremembered events, and emotional manipulation abound as Sloan works to uncover the truth behind the killings—and her entire relationship with Cherry. Leisurely pacing dampens somewhat straightforward twists; nevertheless, the teens' relationship develops via cinematic prose, giving it space to be complicated and messy in a way that makes it compelling to watch unfold. Dugan (*Melt with You*) pays homage to classic slasher flicks in this enthralling departure, a solid addition to the camp horror genre that boasts urgent mystery and queer romance alongside its psychological thriller foundation. Sloan and Cherry read as white. Ages 14–up. *Agent: Sara Crowe, Pippin Properties. (Aug.)*

Comics

★ Things in the Basement

Ben Hatke. First Second, $22.99 (240p) ISBN 978-1-250-83661-8; $14.99 paper ISBN 978-1-250-90954-1

Tasked with retrieving his baby sister's special sock from the basement laundry room, young Milo, portrayed with brown skin, is startled when a large rat-like creature steals it. After a brief retreat, Milo shores up the courage to pursue the sock-napper. Uncovering a key from behind a fake brick, which unlocks a hidden floor hatch that leads to an increasingly vast series of secret chambers beneath the house, Milo descends into an ornately decorated room where he encounters a levitating skull. As he follows the twisting corridors, he eventually emerges in a subterranean world inhabited by various unusual magical creatures—including a giant eyeball with tentacles and guitar-strumming toadstools—whose help he will need to find the sock and return home. Hatke (the Mighty Jack series) gently blends both whimsical and terrifying imagery to create a fantastical, dreamily atmospheric katabasis, rich with details that draw inspiration from puzzle-filled, dungeon-delving games such as the Legend of Zelda series. Wandering panel gutters border carefully paced sequences that lead through wondrous reveals while palette shifts between cool blues, grays, greens, and purples evoke moody ambiance. Milo's bravery, ingenuity, and earnest offers of friendship are handsomely rewarded in this eerie and tender graphic novel. Ages 6–9. *(Aug.)*



★ Ghost Book

Remy Lai. Holt, $22.99 (320p) ISBN 978-1-250-81041-0; $14.99 paper ISBN 978-1-250-81043-4

Lai (*Pawcasso*) navigates profound questions of fate and friendship via Chinese mythology in this playful graphic novel ghost story. Twelve-year-old July Chen goes largely unnoticed by kids at school and even her own father, making her feel invisible. But thanks to her ability to see ghosts, she meets tween William Xiao, her first friend, whose soul is trapped between life and death following a near-fatal experience. July offers to help William return to his body, resulting in the duo journeying through the underworld. There, they learn that because of a secret deal July's dad struck with the King of the Underworld's henchmen, the fates of July and William, born on the same day in the same hospital, have been twined since infanthood. In Lai's richly imagined underworld—populated by silly and creepy ghosts, tile-roofed houses, and stands selling cuisines such as Dancing Soup and Honesty Soup—the new friends must outsmart the shepherds of the underworld if they hope to uncover the secrets of their past and save William. Animated illustrations featuring dreamlike backdrops and bold hues render both a youthful adventure and a mature meditation on the double-edged sword of memory. Ages 8–12. *(Aug.)* ■

JUNE 12, 2023

booklife®

YOUR GUIDE TO SELF-PUBLISHING

First Lines from BookLife Authors ▪ A Writer Shares Her Publishing Journey ▪ 16 New BookLife Titles Reviewed

"A Very Happy Ending"

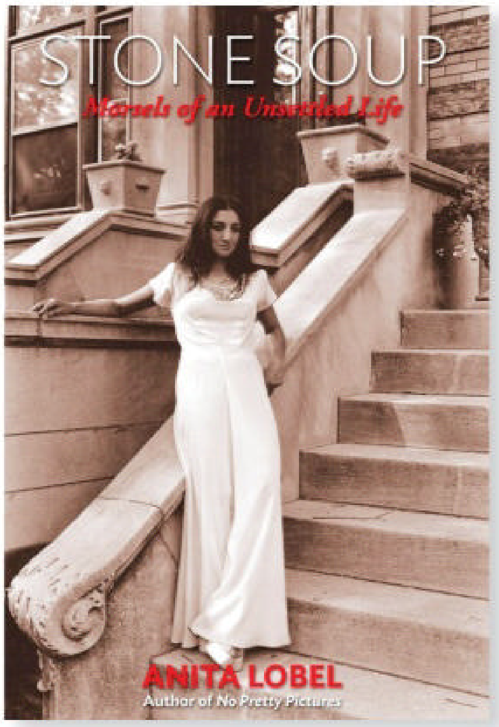
ANITA LOBEL

A beloved children's book illustrator and author independently publishes her memoir

BY SALLY LODGE

A pillar of the picture book world since 1965, when she published her debut title, *Sven's Bridge*, Anita Lobel has created dozens of illustrated works for children. These include 1981's *On Market Street*, written by her former husband, the late Arnold Lobel, and named a Caldecott Honor Book. Lobel, who began her artistic career as a textile designer, has also made her mark penning nonfiction based on her own life, beginning with 1998's *No Pretty Pictures: A Child of War*, a National Book Award finalist. Lobel, born Anita Kempler in 1934 into a Jewish family in Kraków, described her childhood memoir as "a child's tale of surviving Hitler's Poland, a rescue by the Swedish Red Cross in 1945, and ending with school years in Stockholm."

More than 20 years later, Lobel continues her life story in the autofiction *Stone Soup: Morsels of an Unsettled Life*. After opening with harrowing flashbacks to the Nazis' arrival in Poland during World War II, *Stone Soup* chronicles the author's relocation to New York City with her family. There, the initially unhappy teenager found a sense of freedom and fulfillment in art school; lived as a newlywed and young mother in socially swirling Park Slope; enjoyed critical and financial publishing success; endured the sudden, deeply unsettling dissolution of her marriage; and found long-eluded contentment with her true love, Billy Giles. Speaking by phone from her Tribeca home, this warm, frank, and funny picture-book legend shared nuggets of her life story.


STONE SOUP
Morsels of an Unsettled Life
ANITA LOBEL
Author of No Pretty Pictures

Why, more than two decades after publishing *No Pretty Pictures*, did you decide to continue chronicling your own life in *Stone Soup*?

I have had a very interesting life, and a good life, and I learn from both the high and the low points. I wanted to convey that in *Stone Soup*, and also to emphasize the importance to me, as a writer, of the rhythm learned from music and progression of scenes in a theater performance, and to do with words that which I am used to doing with pictures.

In February, Simon & Schuster's Paula Wiseman Books published your latest picture book, *Good Morning, Good Night*. Would you say writing about your own life is a different challenge than writing stories for children?

Pictures in picture books often substitute for words. Not having pictures to lean on when I write about my own life, I have to recreate them. So much in life is visual—walking down the street, looking at people, window shopping, glancing at the sky—and when

Casey & Todd Gent
The Life and Canine Times of Pee Wee and Buddy
The Move
The Life and Canine Times of Pee Wee and Buddy
Pee Wee and Buddy Have a Visitor
Pee Wee and Buddy Go to Trades Day
CITY ZOO
DOG ADOPTION DAY!
The Life and Times of Pee Wee and Buddy
Dog Day at the Zoo
AUTHORS INNOVATION
BARNES & NOBLE
amazon

Your life is as good as your mindset.
Everyone has a story to tell. Writing, sports, music, and my dogs are just a few of my favorite things. Writing is therapeutic for me, and I get lost for hours putting ink to paper.

I like to write about what I know, things I have personally experienced.

My older brother and best friend, Coby, passed away from cystic fibrosis in 2008. Coby's friendship, positive overcoming attitude, and kindness to others have motivated me to keep a strong mindset and to wake up determined to have a great day.

Challenges are definite. Everyday we face someone or something that will try to steal our positive spirit. We can choose to react or respond in anger or love.

My hope for The Life and Canine Times of Pee Wee and Buddy series is to teach kids and adults the importance of accepting people as they are and living a life of loving-kindness. Seeing the world through the eyes of Pee Wee, Buddy, and those they cross paths with will hopefully influence young minds to be kinder, more empathetic, and less judgmental.
By using animals and dog humor in The Life and Canine Times of Pee Wee and Buddy series, my dad and I have collaborated to teach kids as well as adults about kindness, acceptance, and living every day to the fullest. Inspired by real pets in our family who showed nothing but unconditional love, we hope to use these animals' positive way of living to influence readers, young and old.

I'm writing about my life, my writing wants to be visual.

You open *Stone Soup* with the words, "The moment you put pen to paper, autobiographical writing becomes autofiction." How do you distinguish the two?

To me, autofiction signifies that none of it is a lie, but it is not moment-to-moment truth. It's partly made-up—you start with your personal experience and embroider on it. And just because the story is personal doesn't mean it is a confessional piece of journal writing.

Why did you opt to relay your story as autofiction rather than write a straightforward autobiography?

Autofiction is not a lie, but it is more than the truth. And sometimes less. In *Stone Soup*, I chose to strike quite a few things. I could have said many more bad things about Arnold and the way he ended our marriage—it was a terrible, terrible shock. But in the book, I treaded lightly, and ultimately, I was gentle on him.

Why did you decide to self-publish *Stone Soup*?

This is a small piece of literature, and none of the editors who read it wanted to pick it up—probably they didn't want [Arnold Lobel's] Frog and Toad books to be dishonored! I resisted the idea of self-publishing at first, and asked myself, "After all this time, do I want to go into self-publishing?" It was not the way I imagined myself publishing a book, but I thought, "What is more important to me, being embarrassed to self-publish or—at almost 90 years old—getting a book that I want to see out there out there?" And I knew the answer.

After focusing on some of the tumultuous and traumatic segments of your life, you end *Stone Soup* on a peaceful, resonant note, as you and Billy Giles climb into a car to head back to New York after spending a quiet Christmas in New Hampshire with his aunt. Was it important to you to wrap up the book with this comforting scene?

Billy was my great and real love and, though many years passed before we were both free to begin a romance, we were together for almost 34 years. He died in 2021, and I miss him terribly. I decided that I didn't want to end the book with "The End," but with the sentence, "Billy and I were going home." Those were the exact words I wanted to use, and to me that is a very happy ending.

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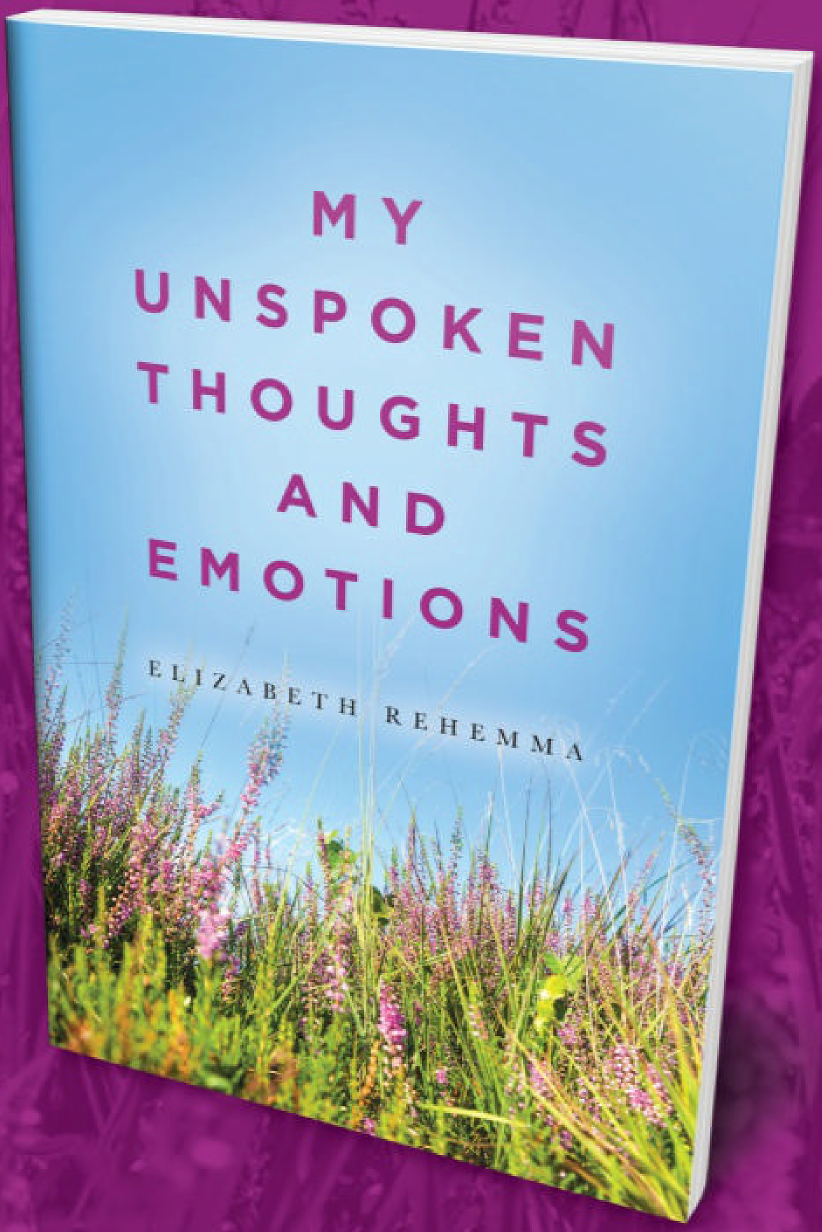


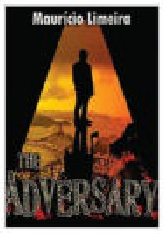
ELIZABETH REHEMMA

✉ lizzywk@yahoo.com
@elizabethrehemma
elizabeth7798

First Lines

This month, we've got stolen statues, dog DNA, a glass expert, and more.

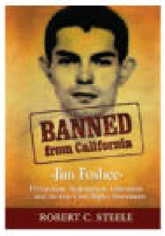
To submit a first line, email booklifeeditor@booklife.com.



The Adversary

MAURÍCIO LIMEIRA

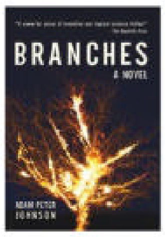
"I am alone and a frightening city sleeps on my foot."



Banned from California: Jim Foshee; Persecution, Redemption, Liberation, and the Gay Civil Rights Movement

ROBERT C. STEELE

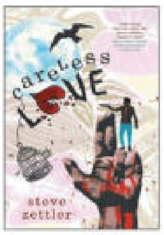
"Jim Foshee had been planning his escape for months."



Branches

ADAM PETER JOHNSON

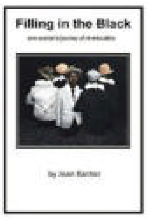
"I'm standing at the water's edge when the phone call comes, sand to my ankles, sinking deeper with each advance of the waves breaking on the beach."



Careless Love

STEVE ZETTLER

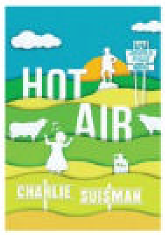
"At her memorial service, I wanted to believe my mother's story had something to do with me, that I was in some way a player, that I factored into her bygone scenario—the life that was hers before I was born."



Filling in the Black

JOAN KANTOR

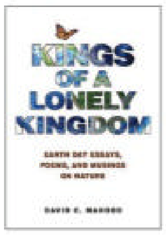
"The George Floyd verdict was a tipping point for me."



Hot Air

CHARLIE SUISMAN

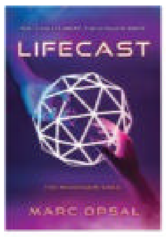
"The fact of the matter is, somebody stole the statue of Hezekiah Hesper, and for months nobody noticed."



Kings of a Lonely Kingdom: Earth Day Essays, Poems, and Musings on Nature

DAVID C. MAHOOD

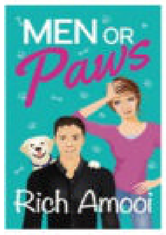
"If we all make an effort to understand the myriad of consequences of not only climate change but anthropogenic activity in general, we can't possibly turn our backs on them."



LifeCast

MARC OPSAL

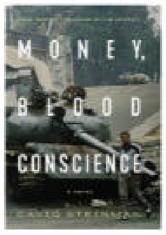
"Welcome to LifeCast, by Neurogem."



Men or Paws

RICH AMOOI

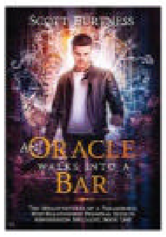
"I was tempted to have my dog's DNA tested to see if he was part goat."



Money, Blood, Conscience

DAVID STEINMAN

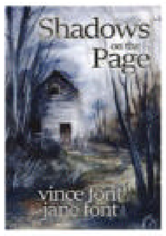
"The black sedan drove slowly up a palm-lined Beverly Hills street, its funereal appearance out of place in the bright sunshine."



An Oracle Walks into a Bar: The Misadventures of a Post-relationship Personal Effects Repossession Specialist

SCOTT BURTNESS

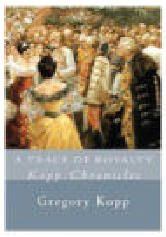
"Not to brag, but I'm a bit of an expert on glass."



Shadows on the Page

VINCE FONT, ILLUS. BY JANE FONT

"It is several hours after midnight when I hear the sound of approaching footsteps on the gravel walk that leads in from the old road."



A Trace of Royalty: Kopp Chronicles

GREG KOPP

"Suddenly, the door of the carriage flung open, as it pulled up to the doors of the Mannheim Palace on an early and cold February morning in 1843."

BookLife Talks with K. Blanton Brenner

Brenner's second work of fiction, *Trinity Rivers Trilogy*, follows several generations of the same family and the ripple effect that a single decision can have. BookLife Reviews called it an "empathetic family saga" centering on "love and music in the face of crises," and we spoke with Brenner about the roles that music and setting play in her work.

TRINITY RIVERS TRILOGY
K. Blanton Brenner

What inspired the Quinn family and their decades-long saga?
I come from a large extended musical family. We all played various instruments and sang together in four-part harmony. Family dynamics have always fascinated me. I suppose, in a way, I'm working out my own family drama in creating other family dramas.

Your previous book, *Appaloosa Sky*, also has a multigenerational aspect. How was writing *Trinity Rivers Trilogy* different from writing that book?
Appaloosa Sky was loosely based on North Texas, where I grew up, and the people I knew in that time and place. It was an homage to the strong women who greatly influenced my life. *Trinity Rivers Trilogy* and its disparate settings are also part of my own life, as I have lived in both Louisiana and the U.K. and loved both! I did a lot of research for this novel, and found that if you tell people you're writing a book and need their help, they tend to open up and share their expertise. I contacted a vocal coach to ask him about arias that would be appropriate for auditions at Juilliard. He answered that question and then went on to describe in great detail the room where Juilliard holds its auditions. Critics pointed out that I tended to rush my writing in *Appaloosa Sky*, so I very deliberately sought to delve more deeply into the interiority of the characters in *Trinity Rivers Trilogy*. I found that taking my time with each of these characters gave them more depth and nuance. I'm so grateful for constructive criticism.

Was it difficult balancing each generation in the novel? Were you ever tempted to expand a character's presence because you liked them so much?
The generation I had the most difficulty writing was the modern generation of young women. I grew up in the '60s in the South, and even though I consider myself a feminist, the rules of behavior that were inculcated in me as a young woman were hard to shake. Fortunately, my daughter and some of my former students put me right when one of the younger characters did or said something that didn't jibe with modern sensibilities. The phenomenon of characters taking over a book is all too real. Ginny Spangler in my first novel was only going to be a minor character. She turned out to be one of the main characters in the book because she jumped off the page! Father Tom in *Trinity Rivers Trilogy* was to be just a literary device, a character put there to hear Quinn's confession about his past life. However, Father Tom and Quinn struck up such a dynamic relationship right from the beginning that I had to make Tom a recurring character.

What is the one thing you most want to tell readers about you or your book?
People experience very hard times in life. I certainly have. I've also experienced miracles, large and small. I wrote a book in which the characters experience both the brutality of life and the wonderment of life. Good times and bad times come and go, but the power of love is not diminished. As Jordy says to Robbie, "In the end, love is all that remains."

What are you working on now?
A children's book about Ginny Spangler from *Appaloosa Sky*. It's her wild coming-of-age story.

For more, visit **booklife.com/brenner**

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Owning Your Voice

An author offers lessons from the indie publishing path

BY JULIE MATHISON

For many of us, the road to indie publishing begins by way of a false start. We dream of the big contract, the book signings, interviews, and maybe an award or two. Our course begins with the obligatory first stop: getting the agent. We polish our manuscripts, craft the perfect query, and wait by the proverbial phone—or obsessively check our email inbox. Hopefully, we use those "passes" and "near-misses" to perfect our craft, and the quest for the publishing contract becomes a crucible for our best work. But even then, some of us find that our book doesn't quite "fit on the shelf."

I can remember the despair of pursuing that path for years, all the almost-but-not-quite moments, and the fear that the way might be forever barred to me. Like many authors, I perused agent wish lists, resolved to write the next book not for myself, nor even for my eventual reader, but for the agent, without whom my journey could not begin. And yet, invariably, I was doomed to follow my voice wherever it led, a blessing and a curse.

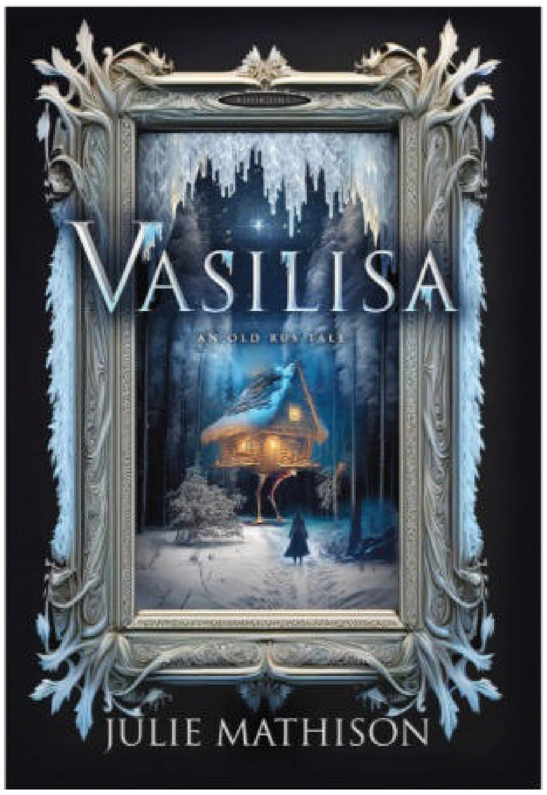
Finally, I got the call and secured my dream partner, a talented young agent at a top firm with bestsellers on her list. I can still remember that moment too: the feeling of euphoria, the certainty that "this was it," crying into the phone when I called my husband to tell him the good news.

A year and a half and two well-received but unsalable manuscripts later, I found myself not at the pinnacle of success, but back at square one. It was the eve of the pandemic, and there I was, face-to-face with a choice: begin the search for another agent or take the "indie plunge."

The words of editors still rang in my ears. "A rich and smartly spun tapestry" and "magnificent job of weaving fantasy and history" echoed alongside "worried that it won't grab readers enough" and "could be more kid-friendly." The experts said my voice wasn't marketable. If I self-published, I would be venturing out into the world with only my own stamp of approval. This was my moment of truth: did I believe in my voice?

I couldn't answer that question right away. I knew only that I had to keep going. And isn't that how it is for most of us? We must write, and we must be read, and the only questions concern how we go about it.

So, in the winter of 2020, I took the indie plunge, set up Starr Creek Press LLC, hired a cover designer and a copy editor, learned how to typeset on Adobe InDesign, and in August 2020, *Believe* was born. After years of writing novels for agents and editors, I was about to meet my reader, for the very first time.



Believe went on to win several awards, a validation, yet one that I experienced differently than I once might have done. These accolades would be useful, would help me reach my ultimate judge—the reader. But my real validation came in the form of reviews—from an 11-year-old ("I went through the whole book and never wanted to stop reading!"); a mother ("My eight-year-old daughter loved this book!"), and more than one adult, surprised to find themselves captivated and reduced to tears ("*Believe* is that kind of book that leaves you with a couch full of used napkins and a heart that is broken and is healing at the same time.")

Suddenly, the tendency of my voice to defy categorization meant

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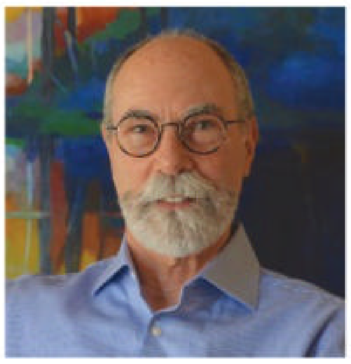
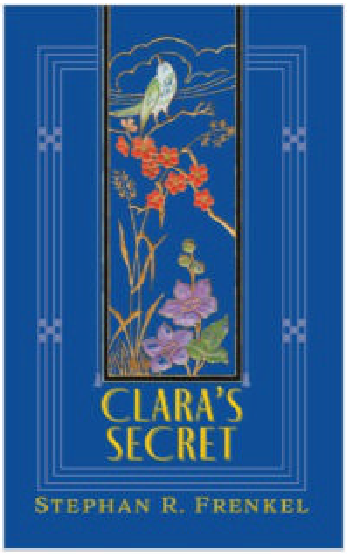
Q&A SPONSORED

BookLife Talks with Stephan R. Frenkel

Frenkel based his creative nonfiction narrative, *Clara's Secret*, on the life of his paternal grandmother. An Editor's Pick, BookLife Reviews called it a "sweeping, beautifully written history," noting that "Frenkel captures Clara's milieu and this rare moment of peace with stunning detail and a vivid sense of the historical context."

What inspired *Clara's Secret*?
Clara's Secret was inspired by the discovery of a hidden album of more than 150 autographed photographs of luminaries and personal postcards from the dawn of the 20th century collected by Clara. The realization that the cards were assembled during La Belle Époque, the Beautiful Era, a time of peace, progress, and prosperity before world wars were known to humankind, encouraged my interest in creating an optimistic story of advancing culture. This historic period coexisted with Clara's adolescence and the remarkable development of Berlin, her city of origin. I immersed myself in Clara's world to understand the source of enduring love and personal strength that permitted her to survive when she was forced to immigrate to America alone in 1939.





Can readers expect another book from you soon?
I am currently researching concepts for another genealogically based creative nonfiction narrative exploring the evolution and confluence of two disparate groups and how their experiences supported and encouraged their comparative development toward an optimistic resolution. Once again, the central thesis is to present a true story of how humanity can benefit from working together in harmony toward a common purpose.

For more, visit **booklife.com/frenkel** that it spoke to readers of any age. And gone (at least for the moment) were the dreams of the *New York Times* bestseller list and the Newberry Award. I was present to the miracle of one reader, one reader at a time. The miracle of taking a stranger by the hand into a world of your making. The miracle of connection.

The indie path is not for the faint of heart. Without an agent or editor to greenlight our work, we must discover our own audacity. With no publishing house to cheer us on, we must probe the meaning of validation. We must answer our own questions and chart our own paths. But for me, there is one reward that compensates for all the hard work, loneliness, and uncertainty. For better or for worse, I own my voice.

With no one to tell me who the reader is or what the reader wants, I am free to express myself, to explore and discover. With no one to judge me but the reader, the feedback is immediate. And with just me calling the shots, I'm on solid ground.

How often do we dive back into a manuscript on the advice of the newest expert in our lives, only to find that the next expert holds the opposite opinion? When we own our voice, we must discern craft from preference, law from idiosyncrasy. There are no rules out here, except the cause and effect of reader engagement. And there is a different kind of security in accepting the mantle of our own *author*ship.

The questions remain, as do the challenges. *Vasilisa*, the book that first interested my agent, eventually went to press under my author imprint and was a BookLife Prize semifinalist, along with its sequel, *Elena the Brave*. Readers love these books—when I can get them to click buy.

Believe is easy to market because it fits, at least superficially, "on the shelf." But how do I "position" my Old Rus series? Should I redo the covers, repackage them for the YA market? This is now my nut to crack, and the beauty of being independently published is that I have the luxury of experimenting, finding my readers, even if they too are slightly outside the box.

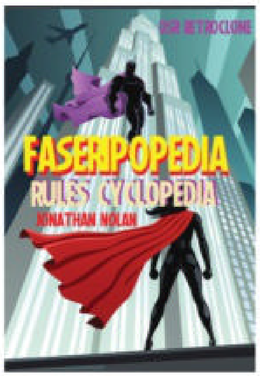
Rather than "writing to market," I have the privilege of "marketing to my writing." By flipping the conventional wisdom on its head, the indie author keeps her vision front and center, and from there, moves into relationship with the reader through a process of discovery. It's a hard path, but a brave one, and now that I'm on it, I find it hard to imagine ever abdicating my kingdom for the comfort and security of the fold.

Which brings me full circle. Upon finishing *The Starlet Letter*, my first YA mystery, I decided that if I were ever to give traditional publishing another try, now was the time. I was curious too: would any agent be interested in a previously self-published author? The answer was yes, with the result that now, as I proceed with my production schedule, I still have manuscripts out and conversations in process. It's the perfect intersection for a before-and-after shot. Once, getting an agent meant my chance to be heard by the world. Now, getting an agent means finding someone who is as passionate about my voice as I am. And if that person isn't out there? It doesn't really matter. I'm already on the journey, and now, I'm in the driver's seat. ■

Julie Mathison is the founder of Starr Creek Press and the author of four novels for young readers.

Q&A SPONSORED

BookLife Talks with Jonathan Nolan



With the resurgence of tabletop role-playing games, Nolan looked to the '80s to resurrect an RPG system called FASERIP. *FASERIPopedia* compiles sourcebooks and mechanics for the system for new players.

***Stranger Things* and *Critical Role* have put tabletop RPGs back in the pop culture zeitgeist. How would you introduce *FASERIPopedia* to someone familiar only with Dungeons & Dragons?**
FASERIPopedia is the same as old-school D&D in that one takes on a role and solves problems. But other than the basic gaming experience, the two games are completely different. There are no "murder hobos" in *FASERIPopedia*. The point of the game is not to kill monsters and take their stuff but rather to adventure as a superhero or secret agent. The stories can be and usually are more sophisticated and more layered and have a strong moral or ethical axis. *FASERIPopedia* is much better at re-creating the heroic or anti-heroic adventures with which people are familiar from blockbuster movies or their favorite streaming shows.
For more, visit **booklife.com/nolan**

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BookLife Reviews

BookLife Reviews are paid reviews of independently published books.
A lightning bolt (⚡) indicates an Editor's Pick, a book of outstanding quality.

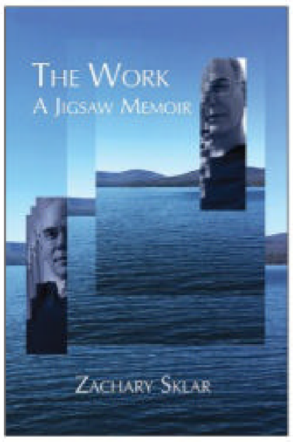
MEMOIR

⚡ EDITOR'S PICK

The Work: A Jigsaw Memoir

Zacahary Sklar | Olive Press

214p, trade paper, $19.95, ISBN 978-1-954744-96-7



Drawing from Allen Ginsberg's lines about the work of "eas[ing] the pain of living," journalist and screenwriter Sklar creates a sensitive, illuminating portrait of his life through loving accounts of the people who have truly moved and changed him, such as his playwright and novelist father, who endured fear and paranoia during the McCarthyite anti-Communist blacklist in Hollywood. In each of the incisive essays that chart his personal and political development, plus those of the U.S., Sklar recounts learning from people who have eased the pain of himself and others, something he strived to learn to do himself as he faced travails of his own, like having his credibility as a journalist questioned after co-writing the script for Oliver Stone's *JFK*.

Sklar touchingly relates his friendships with investigative reporter William A. Reuben, a colorful raconteur, editor, and horse racing enthusiast devoted to proving to the world Alger Hiss was railroaded by Richard Nixon and his cronies, and with Nyoko, a Japanese-American woman whose parents were imprisoned by the U.S. government during World War II. Sklar charts the lifelong scar this left on the family, resulting in tragedy. Also affecting is his account of the transformative experience of serving as a student volunteer on Daufuskie Island, off the coast of South Carolina, in the late 1960s, when the unique Gullah Geechee culture was already in peril from outsider developers. As the younger Sklar questions what good he can achieve, he also faces immediate crises, like burying a friend who dies of exposure. It's a harrowing yet intimate account of life and death.

A writer's moving personal and political history and a call to ease each other's pain.

Great for fans of Helene Hanff's *84, Charing Cross Road,* June Jordan's *Soldier: A Poet's Childhood.*

Sklar's prose is dramatic without being florid, and he is careful, as he observes crucial relationships and a fractious half century, to aim his focus on his subjects instead of himself. He offers exquisite testimony of hard-won victories achieved when we take time to care for each other.

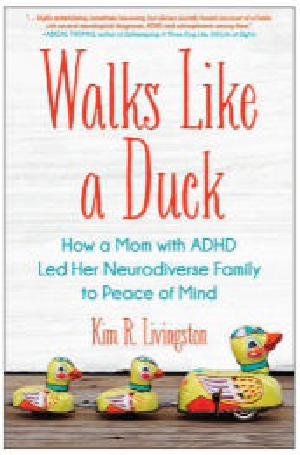
Cover: **B** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **A** Editing: **A-** | Marketing copy: **A**

MEMOIR

Walks Like a Duck: How a Mom with ADHD Led Her Neurodiverse Family to Peace of Mind

Kim R. Livingston | TouchPoint Press

221p, trade paper, $17.99, ISBN 978-1-956851-61-8



Walks Like a Duck
How a Mom with ADHD Led Her Neurodiverse Family to Peace of Mind
Kim R. Livingston

Livingston's enlightening debut recounts how her unique childhood—living with a legally blind father, a schizophrenic brother, and a negligent mother—pushed her toward independence but also meant that marriage and motherhood (which she writes "beat the hell out of me") proved a challenge. She effectively narrates the unwanted pandemonium that comes with having attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), especially in passages about becoming a parent, trying to find the focus and discipline to "meet the unrealistic expectations of suburban motherhood." As she became a mother of three who have neurodivergent tendencies, she found herself haunted by the fear of the discrimination they might face or, worse, the self-degradation that could easily follow.

Her story evokes an awareness of how the disarray in the way she manages her life is nothing but a reflection of the inner workings of her mind. Moreover, it shows how that reflection goes a long way back, to being a neglected child with undiagnosed ADHD, and the impact of this—shame, doubt—on her self perception. As a child, she once wondered if something was wrong with her brain. Now, as a mother of three neurodiverse children, two of whom share in her diagnosis, she dares to seek unconventional ways for herself and her family to learn to live with ADHD while also living the best life. Her accounts of this are moving.

Hopeful memoir of living with ADHD and finding and creating support.

Great for fans of Tom Nardone's *Chasing Kites*, Rebecca Schiller's *A Thousand Ways to Pay Attention.*

While this memoir navigates the complexities of ADHD, Livingston demonstrates the urgency of having a support system whose members both passively understand nd actively participate in seeking help and spreading awareness. Her story, told with incisive scenecraft and affecting detail, calls for empathy and action, stirring hope that peace and understanding are possible, even for people who have spent years believing entropy and chaos innate to their identity.

Cover: **A** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–** Editing: **A-** | Marketing copy: **A**

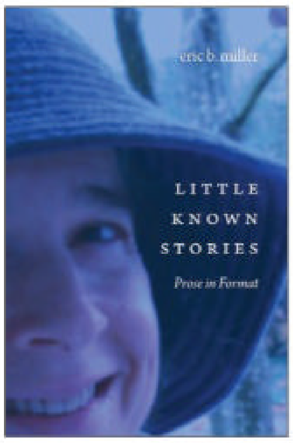
POETRY

⚡ EDITOR'S PICK

Little Known Stories: Prose in Format

Eric B. Miller | Millbrown press

162p, trade paper, $14.95, ISBN 979-8-9859113-0-5



This aching collection from Miller (*Hula Girls*) shares intimate dispatches from a widower's life in the aftermath of the death of his wife. "The difference between divorce and death," Miller writes, "is a closet full of clothes. / Half of everything is still here." These poems find him still stunned, pushing through his waking hours until bedtime, when he figures "I did enough heart-breaking things / for one day." His life, like the closets, is still hers, and Miller writes with pained grace and precision about missing laughing in bed or feeling impatient as she told a long story. Poems that capture the disorientation of life without her also toast, often wittily, the couple's quirks: "It's a good thing she isn't here to see it," Miller writes, of his efforts at handling the complex arrangements that come with the death of a spouse: "As a general rule, / she would not want to trust me / with stuff like that."

Those lines—direct, unfussy, pared to the bone—exemplify Miller's approach. Sometimes, he's conversational, as in these pleading lines addressed to concerned friends and family: "I know. / It's been almost two years. / I know, I should get out, meet people, travel". The poetic forms and the accumulation of striking detail over dozens of poems imbue such everyday speech with fresh resonance and weight. *Little Known Stories* is an immersion in and exploration of grief, and Miller's too honest—too scrupulous a reporter of experience—to promise the epiphanies of recovery narratives.

Richly moving, pared-to-the-bone poetry of a widower's grief.

Great for fans of Jacqueline Lapidus and Lise Menn's *The Widows' Handbook*, Katherine Billings Palmer's *I Wanted to Grow Old with You.*

The result is a rare portrait of a sort of afterlife, days haunted by an absence. At times the verses find him feeling utterly bereft, as when he wonders "why people want to live so long /after losing what they could not live without." Celebrating his Lisa—her artistry, her achievements, their shared rituals—seems to help. His portrait of her is as rousing as his unblinking account of grief is wrenching. The richly moving result is both a celebration of love and an act of it, too.

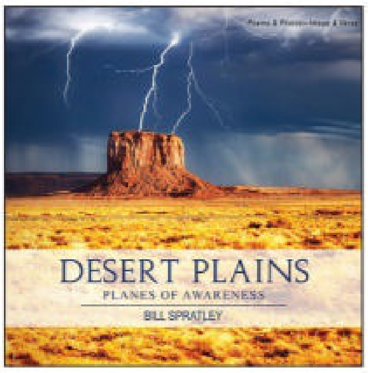
Cover: **A** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–** Editing: **A** | Marketing copy: **A**

POETRY

Desert Plains: Planes of Awareness

Bill Spratley | Evergreen Dream

104p, e-book, $2.99, ISBN 978-1-957860-01-5



Spratley's lyric debut opens with an invitation into a symbolic desert, a "barren" and "dangerous" place that operates throughout the collection as a plane of spiritual existence in which "constant sorrow" is a companion and hope has all but vanished. That might sound bleak, but none of these poems is without a silver lining, and over the course of *Desert Plains*, a book whose heart is in the poet's faith in Jesus Christ, that brightness expands and becomes more clear because the "darkness brought the contrast." By accepting the invitation to the desert, the narrator embarks on a journey through suffering that is often existential, exploring the "age-old question of who I am" and receiving no clear answer in response.

Yet there is purpose to this yearning, suffering, and questioning, just as Jesus had purpose in the Gospels to seek a desert of solitude, too, and face trials there. "All the pain and sorrow" Spratley writes in "Perspectives," "served as a tool" to look inward and find a spiritual awakening and a new purpose in life: creativity, generosity, and love. The narrator's outlook shifts from a state of longing for answers and connection toward a state of curiosity in which there's "much to discover but even more to create" and a willingness to help others who are walking through the desert, seeking the other side.

Poems of faith exploring suffering, raw landscapes, and spiritual awakening.

Great for fans of Daniel C. Colesworthy, Greta Zwaan.

Paired with each of these somber yet hopeful verses are often oversaturated landscape photos and contrived works of surrealist digital art from the public domain whose inclusion appears largely extraneous, though at times they offer a striking visual complement to Spratley's poems. But it's in the poet's own words and ruminations—and in the aching spiritual journey the narrator takes through them—that is where *Desert Plains* shines. Readers seeking accessible but not simple poems that delve deeply into the complexities of Christian spirituality will find Spratley's debut validating and inspired.

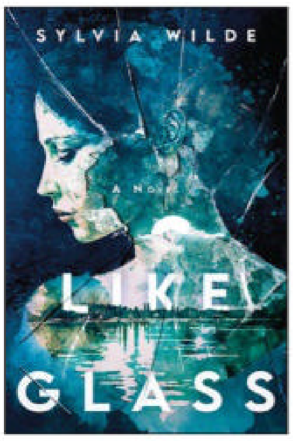
Cover: **A** | Design & typography: **B** | Illustrations: **B** Editing: **A** | Marketing copy: **A-**

FICTION

Like Glass: A Novel

Sylvia Wilde | Left Field Publishers

396p, e-book, $9.99, ISBN 979-83-79188-5-35



The intense, ultimately hopeful novel debut from Wilde traces protagonist Trey's journey through trauma towards peace in a blunt first-person style. Trey, a marketing professional dispatched to Atlanta to close a big deal, is an angry, cynical, often self-sabotaging woman who uses these tendencies as a form of armor to avoid connection and commitment—and, most urgently, to avoid facing her past, especially a still-raw heartbreak and an abusive upbringing in a fundamentalist household. She's blundered through several bad relationships, longing for the one person she can never have: Rose, her brother's wife. For all its hard-edged directness ("No one has ever wanted to find the me that actually exists"), Trey's narrative voice hints throughout at intriguing mysteries: recurring nightmares, family secrets, and the hidden longings of a wounded soul.

Trey must confront both her past and her broken heart in order to heal. Wilde's at-times disturbing story about families, religion, abuse, rejection, and love is fast-paced, with frequent leaps in time that challenge readers to keep up. Trey's story is often driven by anger, as she lashes out at others and plays with their emotions, but refuses any insight into herself. The physical and verbal abuse of Trey and her siblings in the childhood flashbacks are wrenching, as are frank accounts of her parents' violent fights, Trey's anorexia and a suicide attempt, and the rejection she's faced for being a lesbian from her family, her church, and even Rose. Here's a protagonist who feels dead on the inside, one who finds it easier to pretend that Rose is dead rather than married to Bobby.

Pained but uplifting novel of an abuse survivor feeling her way out of anger and darkness.

Great for fans of Jaye Viner's *Jane of Battery Park*, L. Dreamer's *The Burden of Happiness.*

More uplifting is her shaky friendship with Jonah, who excels at listening and giving heartfelt advice, and the cracks in Trey's armor as she struggles to learn to live and trust again. Other signs of grace come as a relief, eventually giving Trey the courage to return to her hometown to confront her heartbreak and her tormentors. This is a disturbing yet uplifting study of a woman's emergence from darkness.

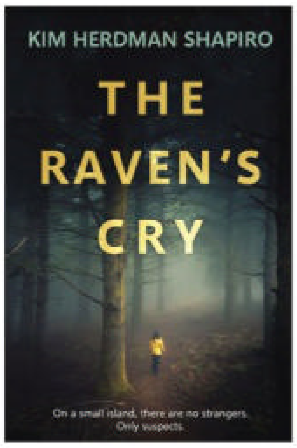
Cover: **A** | Design & typography: **A-** | Illustrations: **–** Editing: **A** | Marketing copy: **A**

MYSTERY/THRILLER

The Raven's Cry: A Wynter Island Mystery

Kim Herdman Shapiro | Level Best Books

301p, e-book, $5.99, ASIN B0BWPL7Q6W



After a devastating breakup, TV producer Kate Zoe Thomas moves to Wynter Island on Canada's Gulf Coast to take on the role of station manager at the derelict CWYN television station. Determined to escape New England and past traumatic events, Kate does her best to become acclimated to the small island and its colorful inhabitants. However, everything changes when her ex-boyfriend Daniel Apollinar, a reporter with the Associated Press, is found dead on the island. As the prime suspect, Kate is thrust into the center of a murder investigation. Still new to this isolated place, and unsure of whom she can trust, Kate sets off in search of the truth in the hopes of "finding whoever killed Daniel and making sure they pay for it" in Shapiro's mystery debut, the polished first entry in a series.

Shapiro keeps the story moving at a fast pace with short, almost episodic chapters. Although Kate is a recent transplant, she has some local enemies and unknown connections to the island that don't become apparent until the end, which Shapiro somehow manages to weave into a pleasantly surprising whodunit that will keep readers guessing until the last pages. Shapiro takes the story places you wouldn't expect: Chinese triads, IEDs, international drug trading, post-traumatic stress, and the deserts of Afghanistan. This all makes for action-packed, emotional scenes that move the story forward while adding layers of uncertainty about what's truly going on.

Fans of small-town mysteries will enjoy this story and action-packed whodunit.

Great for fans of Pat Nichols's *The Trouble in Willow Falls*, Allen Eskens's *The Shadows We Hide.*

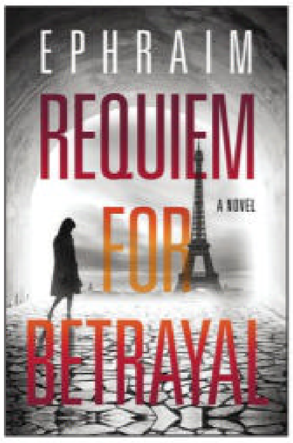
The milieu is fascinating and established with striking detail, like paying for local eggs with twoonie coins, or the powerfully evoked sense of loss—"Loss of resources, loss of culture, loss of identity"—Kate feels visiting the land of the T'sawout First Nation. A hint of romance is welcome, too, though readers should keep on their toes when it comes to the mystery: following the plot's many twists and turns as Kate sets off on her journey for truth and justice demands attentive reading. Still, readers who enjoy skewed, twisty plots will appreciate the threads of quirky characters and doubt Shapiro has carefully woven together. Fans of small-town cozy mysteries will enjoy this action-packed yet character-driven story.

Cover: **A** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **A-** Editing: **A** | Marketing copy: **A-**

MYSTERY/THRILLER

Requiem for Betrayal: A Novel

Ephraim | River grove Books
350p, trade paper, $20.95, ISBN 978-1-632-99671-8



Old-school CIA agent faces terrorists, beauties in 1973 Paris.

Great for fans of David Hagberg's *Gambit*, Brad Taylor's *One Rough Man.*

This two-fisted thriller from Ephraim (*Spy Games for a Deserter*) pits Brad James—recording artist, CIA operative, and jack-of-all-macho-trades—against a complex web of deceit, schemes, and scores to settle with a wide array of characters, mostly set in the Paris of 1973. Brad finds himself embroiled in a perilous investigation into a terrorist alliance after his friend and fellow operative is murdered, running a gauntlet of assassination attempts, government interference, and a host of people of dubious intentions—plus a bevy of female admirers, particularly Yolanda, a wealthy Honduran damsel in distress. This story is full of action, double-crosses, red herrings, and intrigue as Brad and his cohorts race the clock to dismantle a terrorist plot with global reach.

As the title indicates, this is a tale of revenge, on an outsize scale. Ephraim works hard to set the mood and milieu, working in references to pop culture figures of the time, though readers shouldn't come to this bloody, proudly masculine adventure for its Parisian atmosphere. From the prologue to the final chapter, the violence—murder, torture, sexual assault—is not for the faint of heart, and the characterization is in broad strokes: Brad's the alpha male, skilled in martial arts, self-defense and music, while Yolanda is a femme fatale, desired by all who cross her path. Women here are either beautiful and cruel or fat and pathetic, men are either masters of the universe or hapless losers likely to meet an untimely end.

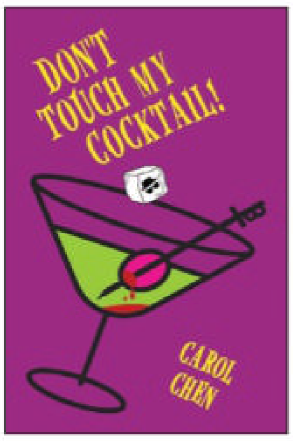
Chapters from a surprising number of different, detailed perspectives demand readers keep track of a large cast, slowing down the narrative. The story's at its most engaging when offering Brad's point of view of the investigation, his life in Paris, and his music, though we learn little about who he was before this case, and some additional context might give him more life. Still, there is a good, twisty story here, and action lovers may relish Brad's way with a gun.

Cover: **A-** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–** Editing: **A-** | Marketing copy: **A**

MYSTERY/THRILLER

Don't Touch My Cocktail!

Carol Chen
312p, trade paper, $13.99, ISBN 979-8-986-43962-4



Public Safety Officer Jane Roberts faces a sprightly, twisty island mystery.

Great for fans of Janet Evanovich's Stephanie Plum series, Sarah Strohmeyer's Bubbles series.

Chen's second Jane Roberts mystery is full of madcap mayhem and a wide cast of characters with seriousness and shenanigans planned for New Year's Eve. The book starts with the wrong person receiving a request to pick up barrels from the docks of St. Frewin's Island. The end result leaves a motley crew of Russians and an entitled Texas senator unhappy and the person who was supposed to pick the barrels up beaten and unconscious in the hospital, while Bernie and Geneva, the senator's assistants, fight over unexpected riches. Not to be outdone, other members of the elite class have their other plans for New Year's Eve, including a temporary kidnapping and a semi-public shaming that pull in even more nefarious characters.

Readers looking for a lighthearted read will likely find it in this brisk, amusing story that's heavy on the hijinks but still full of skillful twists, both comic and suspenseful. Public Safety Officer Jane Roberts, her new assistant Israel, and other local law enforcement folks are kind of on the scent, but the abundance of players—and fresh, funny inventions like entrepreneur Gluella's Lobster Brides! business— provide plenty of red herrings to throw them off the track. Jane's determined to figure out why Troy was beaten and what a group of Russians is up to, but she's realistically somewhat overmatched at times when it comes to keeping up with the densely layered schemes underway on a very small island.

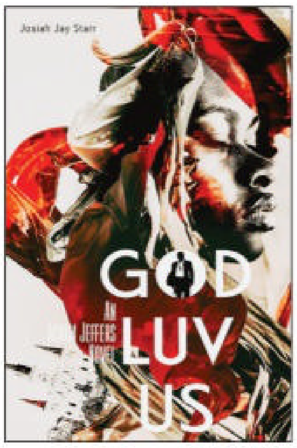
With so many intriguing story threads and an extensive parade of characters who each get a crisp, memorable scene or two, readers will have to pay close attention to keep up with Chen's wild plot. That makes it all the easier to root for Jane and the dazzling untangling that she, Storm, Helen, and Israel undertake to straighten out the whodunits and whodidn'ts.

Cover: **B+** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–** Editing: **A** | Marketing copy: **A**

MYSTERY/THRILLER

God Luv Us: An Achim Jeffers Novel

Josiah Jay Starr | Spirit of 1811 Publishing, LLC
338p, hardcover, $25.49, ISBN 978-1-953102-09-6



Dark crime thriller that pits a "counter-racist hitman" against white supremacists.

Great for fans of Aaron Philip Clark's Trevor Finnegan series, Attica Locke.

In this action-packed second installment in the Achim Jeffers series, Jeffers—a New Orleans-based "counter-racist hitman" delivering justice to customers in a world dominated by White Supremacists—must forge an uneasy alliance with the enemy of his enemy, the FBI, to stop the viciously racist international assassin known as Tarpon. Facing the urgent pressures and fears of his tragic past, his current relationship, and the challenges of life as a hitman and private investigator, Jeffers finds himself hanging on by a thread when he is tasked with protecting a prominent leader who's being targeted after a botched raid that left unforeseen casualties.

God Luv Us is a racially charged thriller that, as it tears into a heart-racing plot, at times plunges readers into the perspectives of the hateful: "White freedom comes with a cost," one POV character declares, not long after insisting "This isn't cross burning or storming the U.S. Capitol. This is all out war." The stakes feel urgent and personal as Jeffers squares off with Tarpon and other monsters, and Starr digs deeply into both characters' perspectives, creating an explosive tension—and moments of sickening unease—that keep the pages turning. Readers with the stomach for it will be intrigued and engaged from the opening chapter, as Jeffers's voice and unusual yet exciting occupation grab from the start.

Written with dark, gritty prose and a wicked sense of humor, *God Luv Us* mines tension from the ways in which these characters perceive and scheme against each other, as neither Jeffers nor readers ever feel confident about who they can trust. The result is a thrill ride, often blood-spattered, that bucks expectations right up to a satisfying, climatic ending that will leave readers wanting to dive into the next installment. Fans of action thrillers that feature real world, social justice themes, and frank talk about race in America will enjoy the inventive setup and lead, as well as the accomplished story.

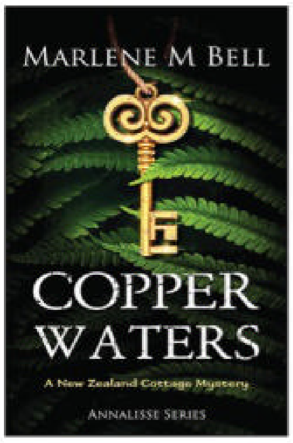
Cover: **A** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–** Editing: **B** | Marketing copy: **A**

MYSTERY/THRILLER

Copper Waters: A New Zealand Cottage Mystery

Marlene M. Bell | Ewephoric Publishing

342p, trade paper, $14.95, ISBN 978-0-999-53949-1



Bell's fourth novel featuring antiquities specialist Annalisse Drury lands her readers in small-town New Zealand for family drama and lots of sheep-related content. NYC-based Annalisse decides to accept an out-of-the blue invitation to visit Ethan Fawdray, possibly the last person to be seen with the "aunt" whom Annalisse recently discovered is actually her birth mother, at his family's sheep farm in New Zealand. Annalisse leaves behind her almost-fiance, jet-setter Alec Zavos, to settle the question of whether a previous girlfriend's child is his, traveling instead with Alec's friend, detective Bill Drake. Though Ethan's family has information on Annalisse's birth parents, their own family drama and the police investigation of the hit-and-run death of the driver who picks them up at the airport makes for a very awkward visit, even before a second suspicious death occurs.

Sleuthing aficionados will find this story solidly on-point.

Great for fans of Leonie Swann's *Three Bags Full*, Belinda Pollard's *Poison Bay.*

Bell does an excellent job carrying the main plot at the right pace, introducing characters and incidents frequently enough to keep the energy up while still maintaining the bucolic, slightly lazy vibe of the sheep farm. The explanation of the murder motives and execution surprises in its specifics while still feeling logical, especially the substantial amount of farming information relevant. *Copper Waters* will satisfy fans of both sheep and sleuthing stories.

Some heavy exposition up front is understandable, as it brings readers new to the series up to speed, though it slows immersion in the current situation. Personal plot elements, like the romance between Annalisse and Alec, continue without resolution, and the fast pace leaves little time for reflection. The mutual support in Annalisse and Bill's relationship, meanwhile, is endearing, stirring warm feelings and readers' connection with the hero. Sleuthing aficionados who love being led to a solution that relies on both technical and social clues, and fans of Bell's ready for a middle story in Annalise's arc, will find this story solidly on-point.

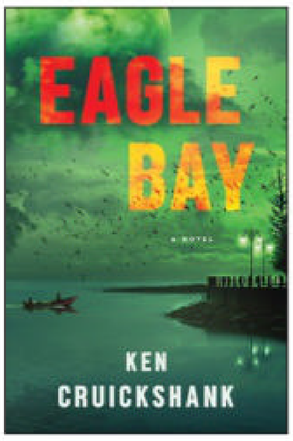
Cover: **A** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–** Editing: **A** | Marketing copy: **A-**

MYSTERY/THRILLER

Eagle Bay

Ken Cruickshank | Glendoveer Press

424p, e-book, $7.99, ISBN 978-1-960981-00-4



Cruickshank sets this multi-generational thriller in a small Oregon town where the Westbrooke family has long wielded power over its neighbors. Despite his cold and tyrannical father's rep as a ruthless businessman, Thomas Westbrooke, single and focused on his career in the family firm, is lucky to call the solidly middle-class John McCloud his best friend. One day, John, a happy father and husband, shows Thomas an old newspaper clipping that features an image of their grandfathers together. Unbeknownst to John, the unearthing of that connection will destroy everything that he holds dear. Thomas isn't the steadfast friend everyone thinks he is. Lies will be exposed, families will be broken, and people will die in the name of protecting the Westbrooke fortune.

After being tragically widowed, Skye, John's wife, finds comfort in the arms of the attentive Thomas, though as the years pass Thomas becomes secretive, controlling, and short-tempered, culminating in a shocking burst of domestic violence. Readers know from the beginning that Thomas is psychologically troubled, and what John's fate will be, which diminishes suspense and surprise. The twists that do come are welcome: Thomas believes that mysterious "assets" are in danger, as Cruickshank drops hints about a Conquistador's journal and underground vaults, and a number of relationships eventually are revealed to be quite different than what readers expect.

Generation-spanning thriller of murder, power, and a wealthy family's secrets.

Great for fans of Michael Robotham's *The Other Wife*, May Cobb's *My Summer Darlings.*

The story is good and fast-moving, with welcome moral weight offsetting some dark material, such as graphic descriptions of sexual assault, torture, and abuse. The swings of sanity and madness in Thomas are scary, and Cruickshank's portrait of the insulating—and possibly deadening—effects of wealth and power often chill, and not just when Thomas performs dark acts. "Love, integrity, and goodness are relative qualities for people like me," he declares to a priest, seeming truly to believe it. Cruickshank's decade-spanning portrait is damning, inviting readers not to wonder whodunnit but just how much worse he'll still do—and whether a new generation can set things right.

Cover: **B+** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–** Editing: **A**| Marketing copy: **A-**

Booksellers & Librarians:

How are you handling self-published books?

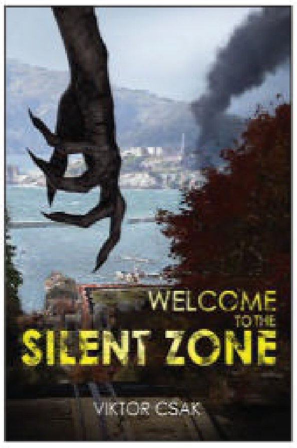
Every week, Publishers Weekly reviewers highlight self-published books that deserve your attention.

SF/FANTASY/HORROR

Welcome to the Silent Zone: A Post-Apocalyptic Survival Thriller

Victor Csák | Writing Systems

476p, e-book, $2.99, ASIN B0BYY7V83K



This epic-length but human-scaled zombiepocalypse debut from Csák follows a man and the teenaged girl he's raised since saving her life as they try to find a new life seven years after "The Breakdown" that upended civilization. Blasting or fleeing ferals when they have to, and bickering in their bus and their motel base when the coast is clear, Cassius—once known as Jack Armstrong—and Abigail have survived long enough in the new Silent Zone world of colonies and mass death to develop conflicting ideas about what survival even means. Abigail wants to help others, to nurture life. Cassius, though, has learned to distrust everyone else and to take on no new responsibilities beyond Abiagil and the seeds, books, and supplies he carries, hoping to start anew.

Puppies, strangers, helping—well, as Cassius says to a third party, "It's better if I'm strict than for a mistake to eventually cost her her life." That division between the protagonists gives fresh resonance to tense but at times familiar zombie-fiction story beats as the duo faces both a host of zombies but also that other wasteland standby: other humans, duplicitous and mad with power, indulging in man-eating and manifestos alike. But there's hope, too, the form of a pregnant woman who hopes to get to a rumored boat city.

Epic but highly focused and humane story of zombie survival.

Great for fans of Brian Keene's *The Rising*, David Moody's *Autumn*.

The story moves fast, in episodic story-like chapters, and Csák proves adept at the logistics of this hardscrabble life, at dramatizing philosophical differences through dialogue and choices, at glimpses of wreckage and carnage that stir a despairing awe. The anticipation of violence is more effectively handled than the action itself, which suffers from imprecise prose, and the human villains in the book's back half won't surprise readers who have feasted on earlier zombie stories. More interesting are the protagonists and their reluctant companions, figuring out what they're living for. The dogs, too, are inspired—both the puppy Abigail claims, and the fearsome ferals.

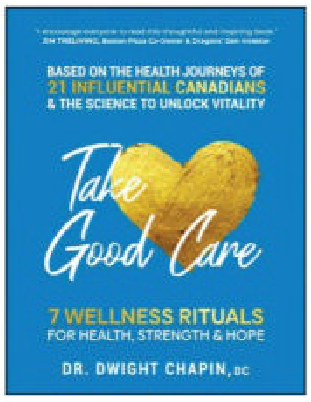
Cover: **B+** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–** Editing: **A-** | Marketing copy: **A-**

HEALTH & DIET

Take Good Care: 7 Wellness Rituals for Health, Strength & Hope

Dwight Chapin | Life to Paper Publishing

386p, mass market, $34.99, ISBN 978-1-990-70023-1


BASED ON THE HEALTH JOURNEYS OF
21 INFLUENTIAL CANADIANS
& THE SCIENCE TO UNLOCK VITALITY
Take Good Care
7 WELLNESS RITUALS
FOR HEALTH, STRENGTH & HOPE
DR. DWIGHT CHAPIN, DC

This upbeat compendium from Chapin, a chiropractor and co-owner of a large Toronto health clinic, introduces seven wellness "rituals" to help readers take control of their health, from prioritizing restful sleep to fighting for your waistline to protecting your strength through resistance training, especially in later years. In making the case for why everyday readers should stay active, practice preventive self care, and challenge their bodies while respecting their limits, Chapin favors straight talk and personal experience, inviting testimony from 21 notable Canadians, among them CEOs, Olympians, the singer-songwriter Jann Arden, and the dietitian for the Toronto Raptors. Chapin intersperses their discussions of why it's urgent to take steps to stay fit with his own rousing advice and, most notably, his practical, flexible rituals.

Those seven rituals update some familiar advice about working to maintain strength and fitness with Chapin's warm, motivational coaching—he offers flexible, actionable guidance about designing a workout routine or establishing a better diet—but also welcome wisdom about self-love, managing expectations, and understanding your capabilities and needs. "My body demands what it needs, loudly," says the Olympic rower Silken Laumann. "And so, I've learned how to listen and have developed a respect for rest and recovery." Throughout, Chapin and company balance such calls for respecting one's body with practical advice for keeping active, alert, and engaged, not just through targeted exercise but also meditation and "playing with purpose."

Practical, flexible guide to staying healthy, with insight from prominent Canadians.

Great for fans of Kelly Starrett and Juliet Starrett's *Built to Move*, Eric Langshur's *Start Here.*

That's the seventh of Chapin's rituals, and it's inspired, as Chapin points to studies that link happiness to longevity and to the fact that taking to time to play—"talking to your dog, dancing in your home, or listening to your favorite album"—increase happiness. The message has power: good health demands not just staying active, but making the most of our relaxing time, too. Self-evaluation tools, clear takeaways, self-care "reflections," and guidance on how to "activate" these rituals all contribute to this guide's utility.

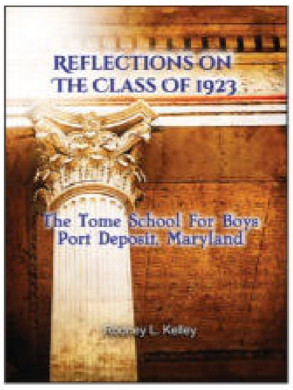
Cover: **A** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–** Editing: **A** | Marketing copy: **A**

NONFICTION

Reflections On the Class of 1923: The Tome School For Boys, Port Deposit, Maryland

Rodney L. Kelley

344p, trade paper, $10, ISBN 979-8-389-47082-8



This up-close historical tribute from Kelley (author of *America's National Treasures: Biographical Sketches of the United States Military Personnel Killed in Action on the Deadliest Day of the Vietnam War*) celebrates Maryland's Jacob Tome School for Boys through the story of its founder, who opened its doors in 1894, and through its class of 1923, on the occasion of the 100-year anniversary of their graduation. Tome, a childless, self-made man, worked diligently to move from modest circumstances to wealthy philanthropist. His lack of education pushed him to build an outstanding preparatory school. Despite his death just before the first class graduated, Tome's vision for an exemplary school survived. Kelley charts that vision's reach by chronicling the lives of the 29 young men of the class of 1923 from birth to enrolling to their legacies in the world.

Writing with an informative bent about the history of American education, and a sense of reverence for Tome and the school itself, Kelley transports readers into those "hallowed halls" but also the students' hearts and minds, as he examines the mixed emotions—nervousness, excitement, uncertainty—they must have felt upon arrival and also their need for an education and to flourish and build community with fellow classmates. Their preparatory work was essential for university admission, though Kelley also emphasizes the other rewards of the Tome experience: "the bonds of friendship forged, the personal growth experienced, and the self-identity realized."

Touching, informative study of the legacy of the Jacob Tome School's class of 1923.

Great for fans of James McLachlan's *American Boarding Schools*, William M. Hogue's *The Jacob Tome Institute and its Schools*.

Kelley writes movingly of each student's life after Tome, as adolescence churns quickly to adulthood, higher education, a wide range of professions, and family responsibilities. A concluding tour of the now-abandoned original campus is touching, though Kelley leaves the question of how he connects to the school unanswered. Instead, with humility and a touch of awe, he traces the school and Tome's legacy through the reach and sweep of the class's impact on the world, making the case that Tome's "most enduring legacy is the students who benefited from his generosity."

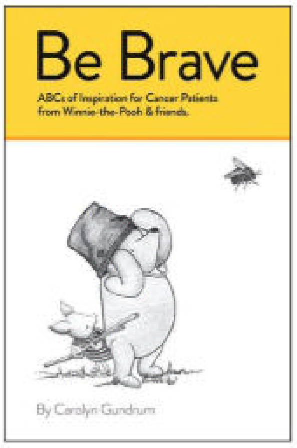
Cover: **B+** | Design & typography: **B** | Illustrations: **A-** Editing: **A-** | Marketing copy: **A**

SELF-HELP

Be Brave: ABCs of Inspiration for Cancer Patients from Winnie-the-Pooh & Friends

Carolyn Gundrum | Gundrum Publishing Company, LLC

76p, trade paper, $14.95, ISBN 979-8-9875260-0-2



Gundrum draws on her experience with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma to craft this clear-eyed but inspirational alphabet book for cancer patients. Acknowledging cancer patients' need for "good thoughts to keep going," Gundrum presents black and white illustrations and motivating passages centered on A. A. Milne's Winnie the Pooh, who is now in the public domain, each with a special message designed to uplift and entertain. She intersperses helpful tips for navigating the side effects of cancer treatments as well, rounding out the book with blank alphabet journal space for readers to "write [their] thoughts, designs and doodles."

Pooh fans will find this as charming as the familiar bear himself, and Gundrum works hard to keep the reading simple but powerful. For the letter "H," Pooh and Piglet embrace—and Gundrum encourages readers to use hugs as a way to heal, while the entry for "D" expresses the importance of a Difficult Day made better by the quiet presence of a friend. In classic Pooh fashion, wisdom is dispensed freely but subtly, as when Pooh declares "sometimes the smallest things take up the most ROOM in your heart," and Gundrum takes time to bolster Pooh's advice with her own understanding of just what cancer patients need: "If you do nothing every day, that's ok! Your job is to get better. Let your medical team do the work. Let your friends and neighbors lend a hand if you need help with anything!"

Whimsical Pooh-isms to inspire and uplift cancer patients.

Great for fans of American Cancer Society's *Because… Someone I Love Has Cancer.*

For readers newly diagnosed with cancer, Gundrum explains the different tests they may face and offers practical tips to help negotiate treatment—including suggestions for keeping the body and brain active and diet recommendations for days when "your appetite is gone and nothing tastes like you remember." The book's strength is Gundrum's tender reminders to never give up, wrapped in the gentle ambience of Winnie the Pooh and his friends. In Christopher Robin's words, "You're braver than you believe, stronger than you seem and smarter than you think."

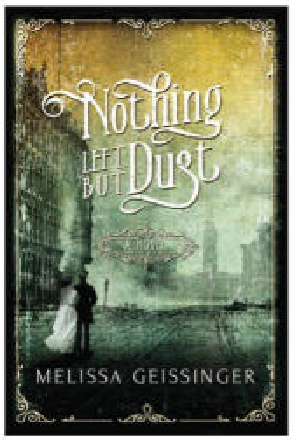
Cover: **B** | Design & typography: **B+** | Illustrations: **A** Editing: **B+** | Marketing copy: **B**

YOUNG ADULT

Nothing Left but Dust: A Novel

Melissa Geissinger | Arken Press, LLC

266p, e-book, $9.99, ISBN 978-1-960440-02-0



This rich debut, drawing on Geissinger's family history of surviving the 1906 San Francisco earthquake, follows Jo—a young woman destined to become a mapmaker and leave behind her cruel relatives—and Otto, a dreamer determined to test his luck as a painter, despite his father's well-laid plans for his future. Their paths inevitably cross when the City by the Bay is reduced to rubble and destruction one April morning, and the two are caught in the aftermath—giving birth to a new friendship, and love, that drives them not just to survive, but to face their pasts instead of running away from them.

Geissinger capably elicits the fear and the horror of San Francisco's infamous earthquake, transforming the winsome city into a mound of ash and burnt dreams through the eyes of two young adults on the cusp of new beginnings. Jo's hopes to take over the print shop she's currently apprenticed at, and Otto's dreams of studying art, come crashing together when San Francisco goes up in flames—and just when Jo's about to give in to the dark voices that plague her thoughts, Otto comes to her rescue, prompting Jo to remember that "it's always darkest before the dawn." The disaster unearths shattering family secrets for Jo, and a renewed resolve for Otto to live a life of his choosing, as Geissinger vividly maps their trajectory amid the ongoing disaster that devours the city around them.

Disaster, survival, romance, and San Francisco's 1906 earthquake.

Great for fans of Kelly Easton's *Aftershock*, Markus Zusak's *The Book Thief.*

As much as this novel emphasizes survival, loss, and, ultimately, being found, it is an eye-opener to the realities of what can rise from the ashes of disaster—both literally and figuratively. Geissinger skillfully paints colorful and complex stories for both Jo and Otto, culminating in a sweet but haunting ending that hints at future romance in store for the two.

Cover: **B** | Design & typography: **A-** | Illustrations: **–** Editing: **B+** | Marketing copy: **A**

PW reviews
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The following are reviews of self-published titles that have previously appeared in *PW*

Fiction

Come as You Are: A Gen X Romance

Jess K. Hardy. Pinkity, $14.99 trade paper (320p) ISBN 979-8-3565-2747-0

Hardy (*The Seven Rules of Moving On*) delivers an equally sweet and steamy contemporary romance—plus a healthy dose of nostalgia for all things 1980s and '90s. Forty-six-year-old Ashley Cooke has taken over her family's ski resort but struggles to turn a profit. Worse, her cheating ex-husband represents a resort conglomerate trying to buy the property out from under her. In a money-saving move, Ashley takes a chance on hiring help from Little Timber, the nearby sober-living home run by washed up rock star Matthew Madigan. Madigan, 53, is a recovering addict himself who barely survived the grunge era, and he's eager to help the men at Little Timber get back on their feet. Sparks fly from the get-go between this well-matched pair—both of whom thought romance was behind them—as they bond over the pop culture of their youths. To make a relationship work, however, they'll both have to learn to trust themselves again. Hardy does a great job creating characters at midlife; the older protagonists are refreshing—and their sex scenes are hot as hell. This is a winner.

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The Good Time Girls

K.T. Blakemore. Sycamore Creek, $18.95 trade paper (270p) ISBN 978-0-9905843-8-4

Blakemore (*After Alice Fell*) kicks off her Wild-Willed Women of the West series with an exciting story of two women on the run in 1905 Kansas. Ruby Calhoun and Penelope "Pip" Quinn are former dancers at a brothel called The Paradise who quit when the owner lost the business in a bet with the volatile and violent Cullen Wilder. Ruby has recently opened a cigar store when Pip arrives with the news that Cullen has put out a hit order on both of them, along with Verna Rolfe, a third woman who left The Paradise. Cullen's safe was broken into, and he thinks the trio was behind the heist. With Cullen and a sheriff in pursuit, Pip and Ruby live off river water and cans of baked beans, hide out at various farms, and eventually reunite with Verna. Many dangerous episodes ensue, culminating in a final showdown with Cullen. Though the cliffhanger ending may irritate some readers, Blakemore's rip-roaring action and lively characters capture the imagination. This series is off to a fine start.

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The Mayor of Pudding Hill

William Delia. KDP, $11.99 trade paper (284p) ISBN 979-8-4253-9103-2

A journalist documents a centenarian's role in pivotal moments of 20th-century Canadian history in the folksy latest from Delia (*Shelter from the Storm*). On assignment for a Nova Scotia newspaper, Caleb MacKenzie attends Albie Albertson's 100th birthday party. After hearing bits of Albie's impressive life story, Caleb insists to his editor that they expand the piece into a series of articles. During the next months, Albie details surviving the 1942 sinking of the Bluenose cruise ship in the Caribbean; his heroic efforts during the Springhill Mine disaster in 1958; his knowledge of a 1967 UFO sighting; and his presence in Gander, Newfoundland, in the aftermath of 9/11, when the town hosted stranded airline passengers. Meanwhile, Caleb starts dating Albie's granddaughter Sarah Chase, a history professor, and Albie carries on a romance with fellow nursing home resident Rosie, who claims she survived the sinking of the Titanic. Conflict ensues after Rosie's daughter tries to break up the couple, convinced her mother's Titanic story is a fabrication and that Caleb is taking advantage of them to further his career. As Caleb and Sarah seek to find out what's true and what's not, Delia pulls together an affecting yarn with a rewarding resolution. Readers are in for a treat.

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William Through Time

Harmke Buursma. Illusive, $27.99 (304p) ISBN 978-1-73740-335-7

In Buursma's diverting second Magical Bookshop romance (after *Rose Through Time*), a time traveler helps a queer war veteran deal with his past. In 1815, William Chambers returns to England from the Napoleonic Wars both physically and emotionally scarred after the death of his lover, fellow soldier James. He receives a cryptic letter from his best friend, John Easton, asking William to travel to his country estate. John and his wife from the future, Rose, explain that they have found another time traveler, Austin Miller, who needs assistance finding his way back to his present. William agrees to help, burying his attraction to Austin despite encouraging hints as Austin slowly opens up about his painful childhood. After a hunting trip triggers William's PTSD, Austin convinces William to visit James's father for some closure. As William and Austin draw closer, however, William's odious former military commander arrives and attempts to blackmail William over his sexuality. There's plenty of drama and intrigue afoot, though the time-travel element feels minimized; and since the story is told entirely from William's perspective, it's hard to know exactly how Austin feels about navigating the Regency world. Buursma makes good use of Regency social conventions, however, to raise the stakes on the men's forbidden love. Fans of queer period romances will find much to enjoy.

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"The genre is now incorporating a more diverse set of voices and tackling a range of topics such as abuse, addiction, racial justice, trauma, and other issues."

A Change of Heart

The executive director of the ECPA learns to embrace Christian fiction

By Jeff Crosby

I've never been a believer in the adage "you can't teach an old dog new tricks." Change is constant, and adaptability is essential to success for individuals as well as organizations. We must always be open to new things, to opening new doors. Every now and then, it's good to reopen an old door, too.

As I complete my 40th year working with books, I've changed my mind about an entire publishing genre that I once held at arm's length at best, and treated with something akin to critical dismissal at worst. I feel like the proverbial old dog who has suddenly learned a new trick.

The genre? Religious fiction.

After my wife and I purchased a 2,000-sq.-ft. Logos Bookstore location near the Indiana University campus in Bloomington in 1983, the store's fiction category comprised approximately 100 linear feet of space. We populated those shelves with books by Jan Karon, Signet Classics from Dostoyevsky and Hugo, and Frederick Buechner's novels like *Godric, Brendan,* and *The Wizard's Tide*. G.K. Chesterton's Father Brown novels were nestled near Susan Howatch's *Glittering Images*. Annie Dillard's *The Living*, C.S. Lewis's *Till We Have Faces*, and Alexander Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* were also there.

It was an eclectic assortment of literature that undoubtedly reflected our own taste more than customer demand. Yes, we carried "faith fiction" of the era, some of which sold quite well because our store's clientele was primarily looking for religious books of a particular persuasion. But the faith fiction we had on hand were not books I typically took home to read, nor were they generally books that I would handsell. They were not books I'd tell friends and family to read. Based on an admittedly too-small sample size in those days, I expected the books to be simplistic, didactic, and predictable. And who had time for that?

After 13 years as a bookseller, I shifted first to work with Ingram Book Company and then for 24 years worked in executive roles with InterVarsity Press, a nonfiction publisher in the Chicago area. Religious fiction was no longer on my radar at all—and it didn't have to be.

Then in 1998, a group that included former *Publishers Weekly* religion editor Phyllis Tickle and other longtime industry friends came together to dream about establishing an organization and an award that would promote increased excellence in Christian fiction. One of its later planning meetings occurred around the dining room table of our home in the Chicago suburbs. The work of that group of people eventually led to the creation of the Christy Award, to "acknowledge the value and impact of the novel of faith in contemporary culture," as its website states. The award was named after Catherine Marshall's enduring novel *Christy*, first published in 1967 by McGraw-Hill and adapted into a CBS TV series in the mid-1990s.

After 17 years of being run as an independent organization, the Christy Award's management was assumed in 2016 by the Evangelical Christian Publishing Association, the trade association of Christian publishing, where it remains to this day. And like a line from Joni Mitchell's classic song that likens life to "the circle game," in summer 2021 I assumed a new role with ECPA and quickly realized I needed to learn a new trick: in order to do my job well, I would need to revisit faith fiction.

If, indeed, the creation of the Christy Award was intended to advance excellence in this type of literature, I believe it has accomplished its goal. Authors such as Amanda Cox, Sharon Garlough Brown, Erin Bartels, Patricia Raybon, Charles Martin, Amanda Dykes, Chris Fabry, T.I. Lowe, and Sarah Loudin Thomas are among a newer crop of novelists whose story lines are intricate, believable, and free of caricatures. There is complexity and texture to their work. There is intrigue and artfulness. They create characters readers come to care about.

Additionally (and thankfully), the genre is now incorporating a more diverse set of voices and tackling a range of topics such as abuse, addiction, racial justice, trauma, and other issues that I don't recall it doing in its earlier days.

I have no doubt that there were books of comparable quality I missed in the genre's past simply because I held it at arm's length and had a bias about it. But I've changed my mind about the whole category. As I enter my 41st year in this work, I wonder, what else am I missing?

I'm ready to explore, ready to adapt. I'm ready to learn new tricks. May we all be prepared to do the same in our spheres of work and influence in this important industry of bringing books to life. ■

Jeff Crosby is the president and CEO of ECPA, the trade association of Christian publishing.

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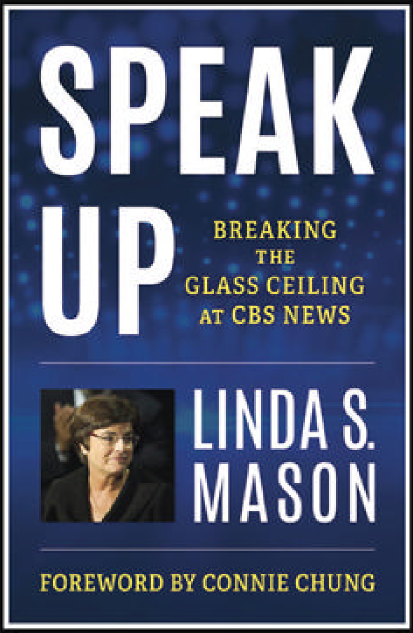
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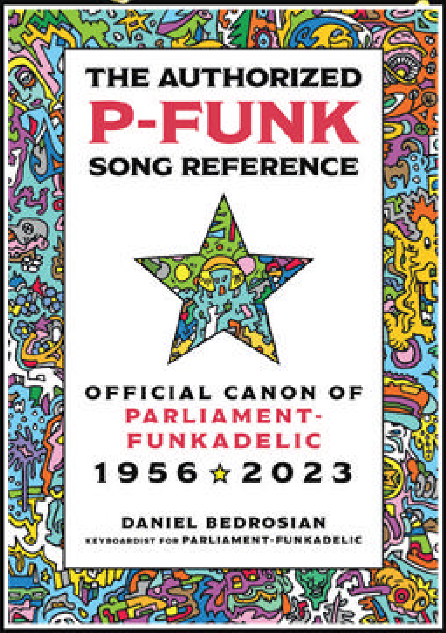
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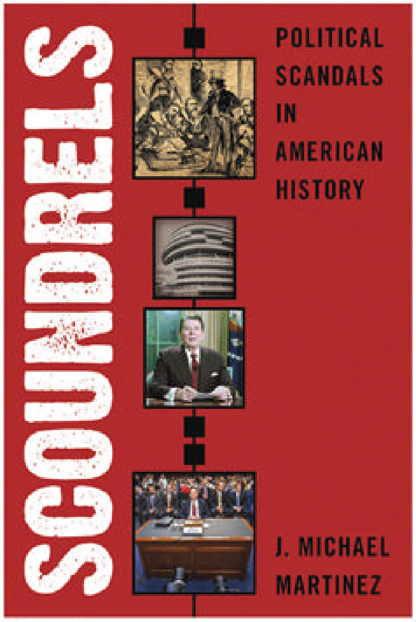
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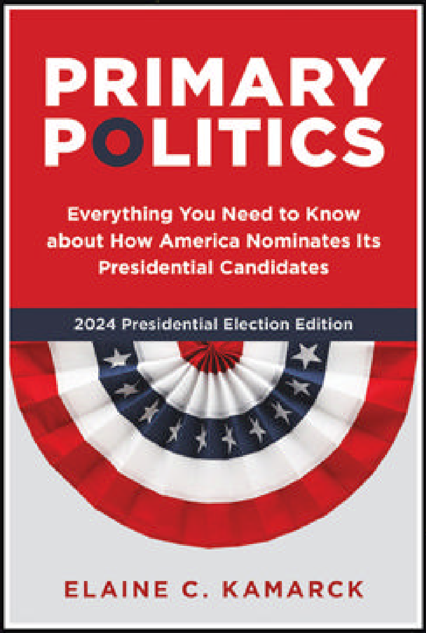
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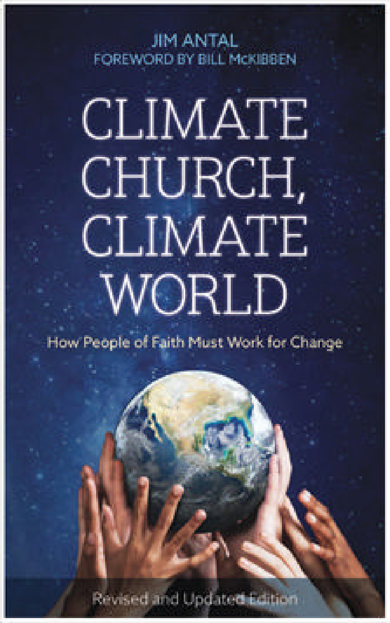
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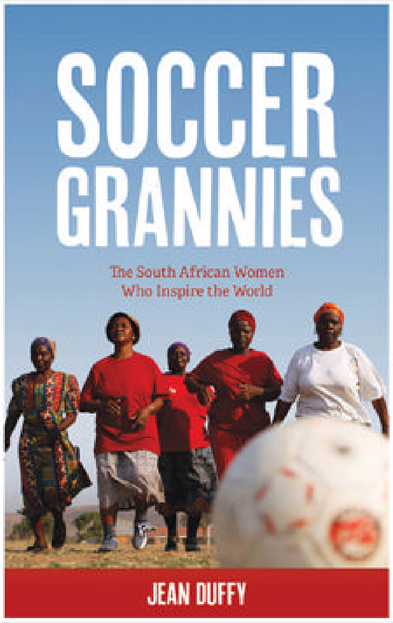
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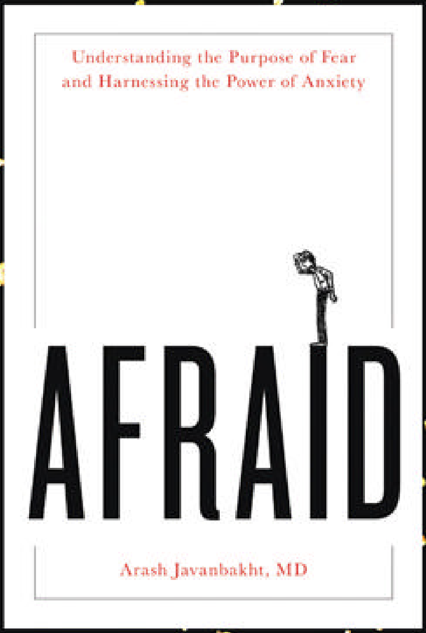
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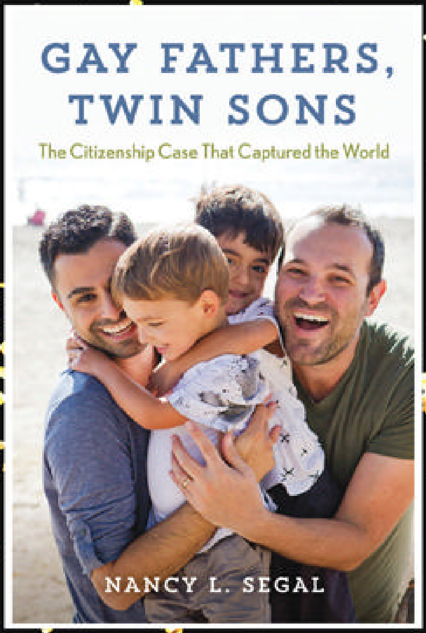
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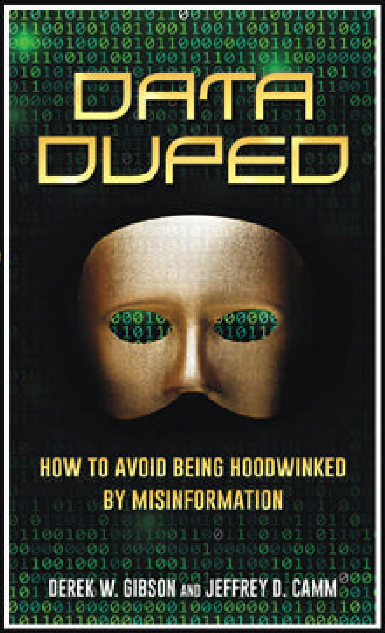
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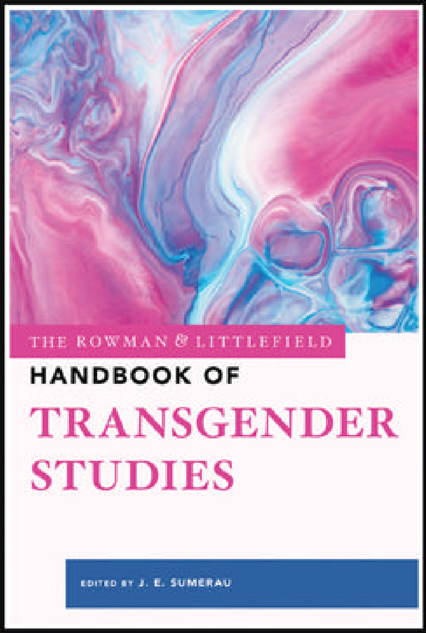
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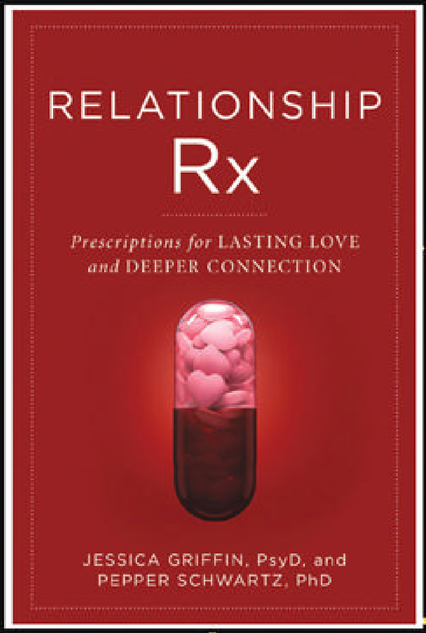
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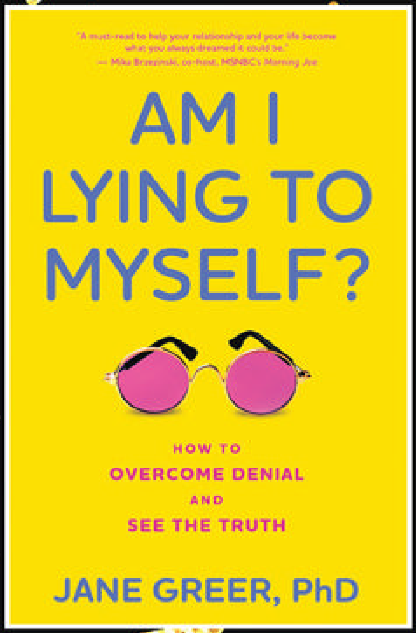
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